A Consul in the East

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WITH ILLUSTRATIONS

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CONTENTS.

ILLUSTRATIONS.

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CHAPTER I.

EARLY DAYS IN CONSTANTINOPLE.

There may be serious young men who deliberately adopt the career for which they, after due consideration, consider themselves most fitted, but I imagine that in the majority of instances chance or parental promptings point out the way, and the youth follows with cheerful optimism. In my own case the problem was solved by my father writing to one of the Civil Service Commissioners, who happened to have been at school with him, and asking him to send down details of any of the examinations for the public service which might appear suited to my age and acquirements; and from the fairly extensive bundle which arrived I selected that concerning Student Interpreters in the Levant, such being then the designation of embryo Consuls for the Turkish Empire and the Near East generally. Not that I had the remotest idea of the position, prospects, duties, or pleasures (if any) of a Consul, but the initial salary of £200 seemed affluence to a boy who had just left school, and whether my ulti-

mate destination were Turkey or Timbuctoo mattered little to me, provided it was somewhere abroad.

My father remarked unkindly (for he had other views for me) that the Roman Emperor Caligula had made his horse a Consul, so that there seemed nothing incongruous in even the baser quadruped to which he compared me aspiring to the office. So that was settled.

This was in the autumn of 1881, and it was not until May 1883 that a competitive examination was held for five appointments as Student Interpreter at Constantinople. The intervening time was spent partly in France, Italy, and Spain in the endeavour to acquire or perfect a knowledge of the languages of those countries. The subjects required of candidates were exclusively languages, with the exception of a little arithmetic—viz., English, French, and Latin, which were obligatory, and ancient Greek, Italian, German, and Spanish, optional; and in view of the difficult nature of the tongues to be acquired hereafter it was certainly wise to exact proof of linguistic capacity.

An additional subject of examination, reserved for successful candidates only, was "reading aloud." The *raison d'être* of this ordeal was something of a mystery. It may have been devised as a pitfall for the aitchless or the stammerer, but the more probable explanation is that the Civil Service Commissioners, in a spirit of self-assertion, desired to show that they were competent to conduct some part of an examination themselves, and the choice of subject being limited by their acquirements, had necessarily to fall back upon reading aloud. At

any rate, I had to read a portion of one of Macaulay's Essays in the presence of the three old gentlemen, who listened with rapt attention and expressed courtly gratitude on the conclusion of the performance. There is no instance on record of failure to pass in this subject, neither did it figure in the programme of any other Civil Service Examination so far as I know.

A last fence remained in the shape of a medical examination. When this was successfully negotiated, the five successful candidates were supplied by the Foreign Office with tickets *viâ* Marseilles, and directed to proceed to Constantinople. At this time there was no through railway communication to Turkey, the only alternative route being to go by train to Roumania, cross the Danube to Rustchuk, and thence to Varna, finishing the journey by sea.

Early in July we arrived in Constantinople, and took up our abode in the village of Ortakeuy, on the European side of the Bosphorus, about three miles from Galata. Here a partially-furnished house was provided for us, a commodious enough residence on the side of a hill, with large rooms and plenty of them, and a tennis-court at the back; and in this village, but not, alas! in the same house, we passed two not unpleasant years.

The immediate mission in life of a Student Interpreter was to acquire the languages of the country. The Foreign Office provided masters, and the staff consisted of Costaki Bey Panjiri for Turkish, Habib Effendi for Arabic and Persian, and Mr Maleakas for Greek. All were curiosities in their way. Panjiri called himself an Albanian, but was in fact a Greek.

An excellent Turkish scholar, and knowing English almost perfectly, he would have been an ideal teacher but for his phenomenal laziness. He much prided himself on being an honorary aide-de-camp to the Sultan, and affected to have accepted the position of Turkish teacher purely to oblige the Porte, which had been asked by the Embassy to designate one. The salary was quite a subordinate consideration. Habib, the ordinary type of an Oriental scholar, was willing enough to teach if his pupils desired to learn, but he much preferred conversation on ordinary subjects, and if possible, a game of chess. Maleakas was a master in the Turkish college of Galata Serai, and alone of the three took his instructional duties seriously. However, as Greek was rather a side-show, his energy was to some extent wasted. In times of financial stress he was willing to approach a capitalist friend of his with a view to making pecuniary advances to an indigent student. The terms of this friend, whose name was of course Maleakas, were somewhat severe—namely, pounds sterling to be paid for a loan in Turkish pounds at the end of the current quarter when salaries were due. As the value of the Turkish pound was then eighteen shillings and twopence, and the period of the loan a month on the average, the rate of interest worked out at over 100 per cent, and it was only when other sources were unavailable that any one applied for help to our respected professor of Greek.

Neither Habib nor Maleakas knew English, so they had to make use of French as the medium of instruction.

These three formed the regular teaching staff, but we also twice a week attended the chambers in Galata of Mr (afterwards Sir Edwin) Pears, who had an extensive practice as a barrister in the British Supreme Consular Court and the Turkish Commercial Court. Mr Pears took an immense amount of trouble in preparing us for our future magisterial duties, and it would be difficult to overestimate the benefit we derived from his lectures.

Student Interpreters were nominally under the orders of the British Ambassador, but so exalted a functionary could not be expected to take any active share in their supervision. His duties in this respect were delegated to a member of the Embassy staff, usually the senior second secretary, who in 1883 was Mr Arthur Nicolson. The job was by no means an arduous one, and the pay (£300) nearly doubled the salary of a second secretary as it then was, so the post was rather sought after. Once obtained, its duties did not appear to weigh very heavily on the occupant.

The acquisition of a foreign language, particularly of an Oriental language, implies a certain amount of drudgery on the part both of teacher and taught, so it seemed good to Panjiri to leave the spadework to Habib Effendi, arguing that as the Turkish and Arabic characters were the same, we might just as well learn these and other elements from his colleague as from himself. He therefore did not put in an appearance in his professorial capacity until we had been in Constantinople a couple of months. Then, I must confess, his teach-

ing was admirable. Turkish grammar is simple enough, and there is little difficulty in gaining a working knowledge of the language as spoken by the uneducated, who form at least 90 per cent of the population. But when it comes to the written, and particularly the official tongue, matters are vastly different. One constantly meets half a page or more in which there is only one finite verb, and that right at the end, the rest being composed of subordinate sentences dovetailed into one another by means of gerunds and participles like the pieces of a child's puzzle. Translation at sight is a matter of great difficulty, and the whole has to be read over before the general drift can be understood. Furthermore, the poverty of the vocabulary of the primitive language, especially in abstract words, is compensated by borrowing *ad libitum* from Arabic and Persian, a plagiarism which is not confined to single words but includes whole phrases. I should say that Turkish is far the most difficult language spoken in Europe.

However, with no excessive amount of application, one was able when the first year's examination came round to translate with the help of a dictionary almost anything which appeared in the Turkish newspapers, to write after a fashion, and to decipher manuscript if plainly written.

Living was comparatively cheap. A man-servant's wages came to two or three pounds a month. A horse could be hired for half a day for twenty piastres, three shillings and fourpence. Five piastres at a restaurant would give you a dozen oysters with bread and butter, and a chance of typhoid

thrown in. What did cost money was locomotion, and as the members of the British community, when not living in Pera, were scattered about in villages along both sides of the Bosphorus, miles away from one another, boat hire was a serious item for any one with the social instinct at all developed.

The amusements which Constantinople afforded were of a simple character. Cricket, tennis, and boating provided exercise in the summer months, and in the winter riding, or football for those who liked it. No established cricket club existed, and nobody ever got any practice, but matches were of frequent occurrence, taking place either in a field at the "Sweet waters of Asia" or at Beicos, also on the Asiatic shore of the Bosphorus, and nearly opposite Therapia, where the Embassy had its summer residence. The game was almost invariably Embassy *v.* the Rest, and was not so unequal as at first sight might appear, as the Embassy team included the staff of the Consulate, the Student Interpreters, the officers and crew of the gunboat stationed in the Bosphorus, and any traveller who might happen to be in Constantinople. There was a good deal of feeling over these matches, for the secretaries of the Embassy were supposed to give themselves airs, and were far from popular in consequence; and when, as usually happened, the Rest won the match, their triumph was unconcealed and sometimes almost offensive.

The Embassy at this time possessed two quite good batsmen in the persons of the Hon. Charles Hardinge and Edward Goschen, but the rest of the

side were not of much account. However, if the cricket was poor, these matches were great fun as picnics.

Only once in my time did Constantinople put a combined team into the field. This was in the summer of 1885, when the Commander-in-Chief of the Mediterranean Squadron visited Constantinople in order to pay his respects to the Sultan, and brought with him an eleven representing the Navy, which gave us a sound beating. Abdul Hamid, who was nothing if not hospitable, offered to bestow Turkish decorations on the victors, and when the proposed honour had to be respectfully declined, presented them instead with gifts of cigarettes and Turkish delight.

There were not many amusements other than those to be enjoyed in the open air. A theatre of sorts did exist at the Petit Champs in Pera, but it was only opened from time to time when a wandering French or Italian comic opera company drifted in, or, still more rarely, when a European star visited Constantinople in the hope of picking up a decoration from the Sultan. I remember amongst other curiosities a Greek company giving a representation of Hamlet, in which the actor who took the part of the gloomy Dane declaimed his part in English, while the rest of the troupe played up to him in Greek.

The chief night resorts were the Concordia and the Palais de Cristal, two dingy music-halls in the Grand'rue de Pera. Here, nightly, waifs from the cafés chantants of Bucharest, Vienna, and Buda-Pesth screeched through their obsolete repertoires

for the delectation of the gilded youth of Pera. The Concordia boasted a roulette-table, which was indeed its main attraction. The public playing of roulette and other games of chance was prohibited by Turkish law, and a gendarme was permanently stationed in the Concordia to see that the regulation in this respect was not infringed. This functionary, who was naturally taken into the pay of the establishment, stood outside the roulette-room and made himself useful by opening the door for clients, and in case of need by aiding in the ejectment of any unsuccessful gambler who might show himself obstreperous. Play was by no means high, but one soon tired of losing to the bank, the normal odds in whose favour were much increased by there being two zeros to twenty-four numbers instead of the usual one to thirty-six.

At the beginning of the winter of 1883-84 a great misfortune befell us, in that the lease of our house fell in and could not be renewed. By an unlucky coincidence Panjiri at the same time wished to vacate his own domicile in Ortakeuy, and persuaded Nicolson to take it for the Student Interpreters. A more deplorable choice could hardly have been made. It was an aged wooden erection, lacking anything in the shape of a garden, shut in by equally undesirable residences to right and left, and giving on a mean lane. The one advantage lay in its situation on the Bosphorus, but this was largely neutralised by the fact that it overlooked a backwater in which any dead horse or dog floating down with the current would strive to break its journey to the Sea of Marmora. But the worst

defect did not appear until we were actually installed, when every room was discovered to be infested with bugs. These faithful insects inhabit most of the houses in Constantinople, particularly those built of wood, but our home contained more than I have ever met elsewhere, nor could our utmost efforts eradicate the plague.

Not long afterwards Mr Nicolson left Constantinople, and his place as superintendent was taken by Mr Goschen.

Our first examination, as I have said, was held in the summer of 1884, after which Panjiri collapsed. I do not suppose that he looked us up more than twice a week on the average during the ensuing year, and as we had now passed the stage of lectures in common, such energy as he possessed proved quite unequal to the task of giving five separate lessons in the course of one morning. The consequence was that unless one lay in wait and captured him directly he reached the house, the probabilities were against his being caught at all. Of course this slackness ought to have been reported, and our successors were so hard-hearted as to do so with excellent results. But we all liked Panjiri so much that the idea of complaining never occurred to us, and we met the situation by engaging auxiliary teachers at our own expense.

Some months before the final examination Mr Goschen made a practice of calling once a week to exercise us in interpreting. For this purpose he would write out a long and purely imaginary conversation on some current subject of controversy between the British Ambassador on the one side

and the Sultan or his Grand Vizier on the other. He read out in English the Ambassador's utterances, which one of us translated into Turkish to the best of his ability for the benefit of Panjiri. The latter would give the reply in Turkish to be retranslated into English. Goschen used to let himself go in these conversations, naturally giving himself the best of the argument and treating the Commander of the Faithful to home truths which His Imperial Majesty was not likely to hear from an Ambassador.

One of these documents was somehow or other lost, and eventually fell into the hands of an intelligent Turk, who, taking the statements contained therein at their face value, imagined that he had obtained possession of a confidential state paper of undoubted importance, and actually proposed to sell it back to the Embassy. I wonder if this previous adventure with "a scrap of paper" recurred to Sir Edward Goschen at the time of his historic interview with Herr von Bülow in August 1914.

After the examination, which all got through satisfactorily, we were ready, in the words of the regulations, to be appointed Assistants and attached to one of Her Majesty's Missions or Consulates in the Levant. Some little time elapsed before we were all told off for our respective posts. One by one my colleagues left for Cairo, Bourgas, Syria, and Morocco. It was not until October that I myself received marching orders for Salonica.

CHAPTER II.

SALONICA.

SALONICA in 1885 was very different to the town with which our troops, to their sorrow, made acquaintance thirty years later. The artificial port had not even been projected, and ships lay at anchor in the roadstead or were moored stern on to the quay. The quay itself was narrow and ill-paved, and had not yet been built on through the greater part of its length. The White Tower was still surrounded by a wall, and served as a prison, while just outside it the old wall of the town ran from the sea up to Yedi Kuleh. There was no tram, no electric light, no gas even. The only railway-line ran to Uscup, and the Monastir railway, like the junction line to Constantinople, did not exist. The whole town lay within the walls, and a solitary villa or two represented the now populous and fashionable Kala Maria quarter. The commercial activities of the town were, however, greater than to-day, serving as it did as port and entrepôt for the whole of Macedonia and the greater part of Albania.

The population of the town was understood to be in the region of 120,000. No regular census has yet been taken in the Turkish Empire—not that

Allah is understood to have the same objection to the numbering of the people which obsessed Jehovah, but, with the mixed population and vast and thinly-inhabited areas to be dealt with, the job would be more difficult and expensive for the limited resources of the administration than the result could warrant. The utmost ever done is to count the houses in a town or district and obtain an approximate estimate of the population by allowing an average number of occupants per house, generally five or six. The various non-Mussulman communities had a fairly accurate idea of their own numbers, which they were wont to halve for the purpose of estimating taxes and to double when it was a question of urging national claims.

Whatever the exact numbers may have been, there was no doubt as to the heterogeneous character of the population of Salonica. The majority were Jews, descendants of refugees from Spain driven into exile by the persecutions of Ferdinand and Isabella in the fifteenth century. Their language is still Spanish, which they write in Hebrew characters. There were probably at this time about seventy thousand of them in the town, living unmolested under the protection of the unspeakable Turk. Next in numerical importance were the Turks, say twenty-five thousand. The Greeks could not have exceeded ten thousand, but they made up in self-assertion for their paucity of number.

Another considerable element was the Deunmehs, of whom there may have been eight or ten thousand. This interesting sect is composed of the descendants of Jews who two or three centuries ago

conformed outwardly to Islam while, as is generally believed, remaining Jews at heart. Little, however, is known about their real tenets. They intermarry neither with Jews nor Turks, and remain quite apart from both.

The grand total was made up by a few nondescripts such as Albanians and Bulgarians, and two or three thousand foreign subjects.

Great Britain was worthily represented in this Babel by Mr John Blunt, who had resided there for the last ten years or so, first as Consul and then as Consul-General. His father had been Consul there in years gone by, and he himself was born in Turkey, and had lived all his life in the country with the exception of a few years spent at school in England. He made his débút in the public service as interpreter to Lord Lucan, commanding the British cavalry in the Crimea, and in that capacity had watched the charge of the Light Brigade at Balaclava, an experience of which he was justly proud. In the whole course of my experience I have never met an Englishman who had more influence over the Turks than he. Knowing him to be their sincere well-wisher, and recognising his honesty and outspokenness, they always listened with respect to his frequent admonitions and usually followed his advice, with the result that during my two years' sojourn in Salonica the administration of the place was carried on without scandal and in as well-ordered a manner as could be expected in a bankrupt Oriental state.

Mrs Blunt was in her way as remarkable as her husband. Her father, too, had been a Consul in

Turkey, and her brother, Sir Alfred Sandison, was then first Dragoman at the Embassy in Constantinople. Without knowing any language perfectly, she had a wonderful facility for speaking with tongues, and I have heard her maintain animated conversations in English, French, Italian, Turkish, and Greek with callers of these divers nationalities who were in her drawing-room at the same time. A knowledge of five languages is nothing out of the way in the Levant, but I never met any one who could switch from one to another so easily and effectively as Mrs Blunt.

Contrary to her husband, who was a pronounced Turcophile, Mrs Blunt's sympathies were enlisted in favour of the Christian subject races, particularly the Greeks and Bulgarians. In their sometimes rather heated discussions both supported his or her thesis rather by pointing out the demerits of the other's protégés than by extolling the virtues of their own, perhaps because they felt that this was the safest ground to go on; and to my position as audience to these arguments, which were obviously inspired by intimate knowledge of the subject, I attribute a subsequent indisposition to regard either Turks or Christians with any considerable degree of respect.

Kinder people than the Blunts did not exist, and it was a great piece of good-fortune for me that they allowed me to join their household. This arrangement suited all parties concerned. Mr Blunt, who did his work as and when the spirit moved him, had his Assistant ready to hand whenever he might happen to require him instead of during fixed

office hours only. I obtained a most comfortable home instead of having to pig it in unsatisfactory lodgings like my opposite numbers of the foreign consulates. And Mrs Blunt was well content to have some one in the house to whom she could prattle at will, who helped to entertain her numerous visitors, made a fourth at bridge, and acted generally as her aider and abettor.

Two Dragomans and two Cavasses completed the staff of the Consulate-General. The senior Dragoman was a Mr Bizzo. I never knew him do any work beyond verbal reports of local gossip; but the other, Jovanovitch by name, was quite regular in attendance at the office, where he acted as shipping clerk when a British vessel visited the port. He also represented the Consulate in the Turkish courts when cases in which a British subject was interested came before them. Neither of these gentlemen was paid a salary; indeed it was rather an exception in those days for the Dragoman of a Consulate to receive remuneration. The protection he enjoyed in virtue of his position, which gave him and his family practically all the advantages of British or other foreign nationality, was as a rule sufficient attraction to any Christian Turkish subject to render the post eagerly sought after. It is more than probable that this situation was sometimes abused by honorary Consuls of minor states, and that the host of idle Dragomans with whom they sought to enhance their dignity even paid something for the privilege.

The Cavass is an important member of a Consulate in Turkey. In ancient times Janissaries were assigned by the Porte for the personal protection of foreign

Ambassadors and Consuls; but when, in 1826, Sultan Mahmoud II. got rid of this degenerate and turbulent Corps by the simple device of a simultaneous massacre of all its members throughout the Empire, foreign representatives had to provide guards of their own. Hence the Cavass, who, after being appointed by the Ambassador or Consul and recognised by the Turkish Government, passes during tenure of office under the protection of the State which employs him, is privileged to carry arms, and, until comparatively recent years, was exempted from military service. The number allowed is limited, four being the maximum for a Consulate-General, three for a Consulate, and two for a Vice-Consulate. Chosen almost invariably from the ranks of the Mussulman population, these men as a rule serve with exemplary fidelity, and may be trusted to an extent which would, sad to say, be dangerous in the case of a Christian.

At Salonica we had only two Cavasses. Hussein, the senior, was a shrewd middle-aged Turk of long experience, who was capable of running most of the ordinary work of the Consulate by himself. The other rejoiced in the name of Abeddin, a young Albanian of phenomenal stupidity, who only kept his place because he was under the special protection of Mrs Blunt. Being a bachelor, he slept in the Consulate at night, and was supposed to guard it. Not that there was any need for such a precaution, for the last place a Salonica thief would venture to burgle was Mr Blunt's domicile.

Three days a week a professional scribe, remarkable only for the most appalling squint, called at

the office to do any correspondence in Turkish which might be required. Presumably he had other clients, for he certainly did not make a living out of us.

The British community was a motley collection. The only members thereof who had been born in the British Isles were a Presbyterian minister and his wife, engaged in the uphill task of converting the Jews. I cannot say how many years they had been in Salonica on this mission without any material results to show, but they kept a school, and one hopes that their educational work was not thrown away. A few other Englishmen were members of British families long established in the Levant, some of them so long that they had joined the Orthodox Church and spoke Greek in preference to English. Then there were a fair sprinkling of Maltese, who are to be met with in every port of the Levant, and several families of Gibraltar Jews, indistinguishable, apart from their British nationality, from the mass of Spanish Jews who formed the majority of the population. Beyond registering their birth when they entered this vale of tears and their death when they left it, marrying them when they demanded the rite of the Consul, issuing passports to such as had occasion to travel, and watching over the administration of estates, they afforded little work to the Consulate, and were generally a very respectable and law-abiding lot.

Even allowing for occasional bursts of activity, I do not suppose that my official duties engrossed more than a couple of hours per day on the average. There was not much doing in the political way beyond

a scare on the Greek frontier, which occurred during the early winter of 1885, the routine work was scanty, and it must be acknowledged that the Salonica Consulate was not on the whole the best training-ground for a beginner who needed regular office hours and constant occupation to mould him into a useful bureaucratic type. Mr Blunt's system was unconventional. Like most men bred in the East, he was an early riser, and, winter or summer, would get up with the sun. He had usually done any work he had to do and was ready for his morning rounds before I was down for breakfast. Then every day, whatever the weather might be, he would sally forth to visit Turkish officials and other acquaintances in the town in order to learn the latest news. Occasionally this routine would be varied by a tour in the bazaars to see that the local shop-keepers were not encroaching on the footways. I cannot imagine what originally led him to regard this duty as devolving on himself, but it had become his habit, with a municipal officer in his train, to drive away with invective and even blows any trader who ventured to place his wares where they impeded the free passage of pedestrians. Nobody seemed to regard this manifestation of public zeal as *ultra vires* in the case of Mr Blunt, who was indeed considered more as a local institution than a foreign representative.

By midday his peregrinations were over, and he returned to the Consulate, where I was ready to take down from his dictation and subsequently copy out any report on local affairs which he might have to make to the Ambassador at Constantinople

or the Foreign Office. This contingency arose pretty frequently, as Mr Blunt took so intense an interest in everything occurring in his extensive district that few events seemed to him too trivial for record. His style was rather monotonous and his vocabulary limited, so before long he was able to substitute for the dictation a short statement of what he wanted to say, and trust me to write it out in exactly the words he would have used himself. This shortened the operation considerably. After lunch it was his invariable habit to retire to bed for a couple of hours, and then to repair to the club, there to play bridge until dinner-time. Before 10 P.M. he was in bed and asleep.

This arrangement of my chief's day obviously left considerable leisure to his understudy. The afternoons were always free. Sometimes Mrs Blunt would carry me off, an unwilling victim, to pay a round of calls in her brougham, a vehicle of which she was extremely proud, as no other Consul's wife kept anything in the shape of a carriage. Once a week she was herself at home to visitors, when I was requisitioned to hand round the tea and make myself generally useful. If, as happened occasionally, Mussulman ladies, the womenfolk of Turkish officials, announced their intention of paying a call, I was driven pitilessly out of the house, however earnestly I begged to be allowed to peep discreetly at the houris from a secure hiding-place. For the hours before dinner the club offered an asylum with bridge and billiards.

It was the exception for the Blunts to dine alone, and two or three people were sure to drop in most evenings with or without an invitation. Mrs Blunt

was the soul of hospitality, and any one ready to make up a bridge-table after dinner was sure of a welcome. Her husband could not be reckoned on as a partner, first, because he, no doubt justly, despised our calibre as bridge-players; and secondly, on account of his early retirement to bed, a habit which he stoutly refused to abandon even when there was a formal dinner-party.

It is a peculiarity of society in Turkey that the ruling race remains entirely aloof. The exclusiveness of Turkish family life admitting none but near relatives to share in it, foreigners and Christians in general are restricted to more or less formal relations with their Turkish acquaintances, and it is of the rarest occurrence to be entertained in their houses. Christian ladies exchange calls with Turkish ladies, and Christian men with Turks; but it would imply the gravest breach of decorum for a man even to hint at the existence of the adult members of his harem when conversing with a Turk. Society in Salonica was thus confined to the foreign element, with a slight admixture of the more civilised native Christians and a still smaller contingent of Jews. The Consuls and their belongings constituted the aristocracy of the place, and any one on social terms at a Consulate was considered to be in the swim. It was not a very extensive swim nor a very lively one. An occasional dinner-party, a hop or two in the winter, and picnics in the summer were the sum of our gaieties, but sufficient to render us quite satisfied with ourselves, and inclined to look down on other towns in Macedonia which were even duller than Salonica.

Intellectual diversions there were none, no theatres or concerts, not even a café chantant. I do not remember that the town boasted a bookseller's, certainly no shop which dealt exclusively in books. Sometimes a matron with marriageable daughters would invite the young people to an awful form of entertainment known as "Jeux innocents," which simply meant nursery games of the hunt-the-slipper type. Mrs Blunt once gave one of these orgies for my benefit, but I earnestly deprecated any repetition of the effort.

The great centre of reunion was the club. Everybody who was anybody belonged to it, and from four o'clock in the afternoon until dinner the rooms were thronged. Hardly any one went after dinner, as the streets were neither so clean nor so well lighted as to make a walk in the dark attractive. Mr Blunt, the founder of the institution, presided permanently over the Committee, and I must admit that in this, as in other capacities, he was inclined to be a little despotic. Only once was his supremacy challenged, when a new French Consul, misunderstanding the situation, incited his colony to propose him as Vice-President, with the ulterior object, as was well understood, of eventually ousting the President from his position. Salonica fairly rocked with excitement while the crisis lasted, but the vast majority of the members rallied round Mr Blunt, and the dastardly intrigue was quashed.

One really serious drawback to Salonica was that there was no dentist in the place. Any one who required to have a tooth drawn had either to call in the piano-tuner, who added the art of extraction

to his primary accomplishment, or he could apply to a French Sister of Charity. This pious lady possessed a fearsome instrument called a "key," and once it got a good grip on a patient and the screw was turned something had to give. Sometimes it was the tooth, sometimes the jawbone, but complete failure was unknown. I cannot be sufficiently thankful that I was never forced to have recourse to either practitioner.

At this time the shooting round Salonica was quite good, but it was considered dangerous to go out alone, even in the immediate vicinity of the town. The district had a very bad reputation for brigandage, and within the last five years two Englishmen had been carried off and held to ransom. To secure their life and liberty the British Government was compelled to pay £12,000 for one and rather more for the other; and though such captures were almost always the result of deep-laid plans, and the casual one-day excursionist was unlikely to be involved, the countryside was full of bad characters quite ready to murder a sportsman for the sake of his gun and the little money he might have on him, and one only ventured out shooting in parties.

Mr Blunt got up one of these excursions a month or so after I reached Salonica, which might have ended in disaster to me. We left by carriage early in the morning, drove for a dozen miles, and then proceeded to form line and beat the country. About midday, in pursuit of a covey of partridges in thickish cover, I foolishly allowed myself to get separated from the rest, lost all sense of direction,

and before long was as completely lost as a babe in the wood. I did not even know the name of the village where the carriages were left, and had I known it there was not a soul to be seen from whom the way could be asked. The Bay of Salonica was visible in the far distance, and it seemed best to make my way home across country, which I proceeded to do. Two or three miles farther on I came across an Albanian sheepfold, and endeavoured to avoid it by making a detour, but two dogs attached thereto came after me, evidently meaning business. These Albanian sheep-dogs are sufficiently large and savage at any time, but to me in my forlorn condition they appeared of the size of elephants and the ferocity of lions. They got up to me and attacked, one on each side, without uttering a sound, which made their serious intentions all the more apparent. I had not even time to shoulder my gun, but shot one from the hip, with the muzzle almost touching him. The other followed me howling.

Short as had been my sojourn in Salonica, I had already been warned of the awful results of killing these dogs—how their owners would sometimes exact a life for a life, and how the least one could expect was to be severely beaten and pay a heavy fine, calculated in the following way. The defunct was held up by his tail with his nose touching the ground, and corn poured over him until he was completely covered, the value of the corn required for this being the measure of the damages exacted. This had actually happened to a French Consul two or three years before, and who was I to escape when a Consul had succumbed ?

By the grace of Providence the lamentations of the bereaved dog failed to attract the attention of his masters, and I was able to pursue my way to Salonica at a greatly accelerated rate of progression. By four o'clock or so I reached the Consulate, tired out, very hungry, and glad to accept the ministrations and sympathy of Mrs Blunt. We fully expected to see her husband before dinner, but when nine o'clock struck and he had not returned, the police were informed, and two zaptiehs sent out to find him. He came back in the small hours of the morning, having spent the afternoon and evening in searching, with the aid of the inhabitants of two villages, for my mutilated corpse. He was not so pleased as he might have been at finding me snugly in bed and asleep, and this was the only time he ever lost his temper with me, though not for lack of other opportunities.

In the summer of 1886 the even tenor of our existence was disturbed by a visit from the Mediterranean squadron. There was nothing uncommon in this, except the fact that the Duke of Edinburgh was in command, and that his nephew, the present King, then Prince George of Wales, was serving on board H.M.S. *Dreadnought* as a junior lieutenant, which naturally added much éclat to the occasion. The squadron only stayed four or five days, during which we were kept pretty busy. The Duke called officially on the Vali (Governor-General), Mr Blunt attending the Duke and I attending Mr Blunt. Such visits are usually very dull and stiff functions, and this was no exception to the rule, though I did derive some slight pleasure from watching the

expression of the Duke—who, as a good naval officer, liked his liquor strong—when a spoonful of rose-leaf jam was offered for his consumption, to be washed down by a glass of water. This exhilarating form of refreshment was declined with some emphasis. After the visit, the Duke, the Prince, and the Vali lunched at the Consulate. Next day we all lunched on board the flagship, and in the evening the Blunts gave a ball in honour of the squadron, which was graced by the presence of the Duke and the Prince, as well as by contingents of officers from all the ships. I think this must have been the proudest moment of Mrs Blunt's life. To entertain naval officers was always one of her greatest pleasures, but to receive the son and the grandson of the Queen under her roof with the élite of Salonica society looking on was indeed an experience to delight her hospitable soul.

The visit of the fleet was not without its repercussion on my own affairs. Some time in the ensuing winter the Greek Government communicated to the Foreign Office information it professed to have gathered to the effect that a monastery on the mainland just off the peninsula of Mount Athos was being transformed by the Russians into a fortified place to the prejudice of Greek interests. This alarming piece of news was passed on to the Commander-in-Chief in the Mediterranean for investigation, and the Commander-in-Chief detailed H.M.S. *Albacore* to make inquiries on the spot, suggesting to her commanding officer that he should call at Salonica and borrow from Mr Blunt the young man whom he had seen in the Consulate to act as inter-

preter and local expert. This was done, and I embarked.

The *Albacore*, a minute craft not half the size of a modern destroyer, possessed no accommodation for visitors. Her Commander generously gave up to me his own bunk, and himself slept in a hammock slung in the cabin which served him both for bedroom and sitting-room. In lovely weather we rounded Mount Athos and soon reached our destination, and the Commander and I landed. We took guns with us, so as to conceal our political mission under the disguise of an innocent shooting excursion, but found nothing in the shape of game. I forget whether my nautical companion steered by the compass or whether we simply asked our way, but after three or four miles' wandering we reached the offending monastery, only to discover another Greek mare's nest. It lay snugly at the bottom of a little valley in a position where any fortification was out of the question. No more than eight monks, all Russians, it is true, formed the community, one of whom fortunately spoke a little Greek, so we were able to exchange ideas. They were jovial fellows, and seemed delighted to see us and fill us up with tea and many varieties of strange liquors manufactured on the premises, and to receive in exchange the latest news from the outside world.

I regret to say that this little community had so far relaxed the accepted rules of monastic life as to share their solitude with a buxom female. On our first entry, which took the establishment rather by surprise, we saw her at an upper window between two of the reverend anchorites, and it certainly

looked as if each had an arm round her waist. In the monasteries on Mount Athos proper the female sex is held in such abhorrence that the presence even of a hen is tabooed; here in the more human atmosphere of the plain less intolerant views evidently prevailed.

The return to Salonica was hardly so enjoyable as the passage out. The weather changed to a furious storm, which can hardly have been surpassed in violence by that which ruined the fleet of Darius (or was it Xerxes ?) in the same locality twenty odd centuries before, and the wretched little *Albacore* rolled, pitched, and gyrated as if she was possessed by a devil. A far hardier sailor than myself might well have succumbed. Nearly forty years have elapsed since then, but I can remember as if it was yesterday hanging over the side in agony, and hearing the Commander as he watched my convulsions remark to his officers with mingled pity and contempt, "If I were as sick as that when I went to sea, I'm damned if I would not stop on shore." Which was rather ungrateful, as I was there entirely for his benefit and by no choice of my own.

On the whole, it was a happy peaceful time at Salonica. None of the little Balkan States had for the moment the power or the inclination to give trouble. The Serbs were digesting the beating they received from the Bulgars in 1885. The Bulgars had internal worries of their own, which occupied all their attention. Greek ambitions were still in an embryo stage, and the Turks asked for nothing better than to be left alone to govern or misgovern

their country after their own peculiar fashion. I certainly had ample time to prepare for the final examination which loomed before me in 1887, and in the spring of that year I was thinking of seriously getting to work when Mr Blunt suddenly fell ill. He was undoubtedly a very sick man, but it is probable that the local leeches who swarmed round his bed exaggerated the gravity of his condition in order to gain the greater kudos by curing him. Be that as it may, the concern which this misfortune aroused amongst every class of our community was a striking tribute to the unique position which the British Consul-General had attained in the town. The Turks even offered up prayers for his recovery in their mosques, a proceeding absolutely unique in my experience.

When, as the result of the Turks' prayers, or simply in the ordinary course of events, he became convalescent, he proceeded with his wife to Constantinople to recuperate, and I was left in charge of the Consulate for a month or so. It was a little unfortunate to have this burden thrown on one on the eve of an examination, but as a matter of fact there was not very much extra to do, for Mr Blunt's absence coincided with a period of complete local calm.

In only one respect was fortune unkind to me. In the two previous years we had not had a single case of a slave applying to the Consulate for manumission; and when one day a black lady came to me for the purpose, I was quite at a loss how to deal with her. It was a curious anomaly that, while domestic slavery was a recognised institution, no

person was compelled to remain a slave against his or her will. As a rule slaves were quite kindly treated, and differed little from ordinary domestic servants, so it was rare that any of them desired a change of status. When they did, they usually concluded to make things sure by coming first to a British Consulate. I made a good deal more fuss over the case than was at all necessary, shepherding her myself to the presence of the Vali, and remaining there until she was provided with the necessary papers.

The lady talked to her friends about her experiences, and some of them apparently concluded that as there was quite a young man in charge of the British Consulate, it might be sport to call and rag him. In pursuance of this idea two damsels presented themselves, young and not so dusky of hue as to preclude a certain comeliness. I experienced some difficulty in getting them to come to the point. They formulated no complaint of their own, but talked vaguely of some friend who was not happy in her domestic surroundings, and then relapsed into titters, furtive nudgings of one another, and the coquettish adjustment of veils. In the end their demeanour became so skittish that I was constrained to summon Hussein, the head Cavass, to act as chaperon. This experienced functionary at once saw through their frivolity, and bundled them out of the house without ceremony. He also dealt summarily with two or three subsequent visitors of the same type, and I was troubled no more.

CHAPTER III.

ERZEROUM.

The Blunts returned in July, and I left for Constantinople to undergo the final examination in the law, language, and history of Turkey and in International Law. On emerging successfully from this trial, I was now ready to be appointed Vice-Consul when a vacancy should occur, which might be in a year or might be delayed two years or more. For the moment my services were requisitioned as junior Dragoman to the Embassy.

The term "Dragoman" is rather an unfortunate one, recalling as it does the greasy and avaricious individual who acts as cicerone to travellers in the East. It is simply a corruption of the word "Terjiman," meaning in Turkish an interpreter; and an Embassy Dragoman acts as intermediary between the Ambassador and the Turkish authorities, with whom he is unable to deal direct through ignorance of their language, customs, and mental outlook. "Oriental Secretary" would be a better name, and is in fact the term employed for similar officials in the Legation at Teheran and the Residency at Cairo. The Chief Dragoman at the Embassy is a very important person, who has, as local expert, to

advise the Ambassador on all matters connected with the work of the Mission, to keep him informed of the trend of Turkish opinion and policy and of all interesting occurrences in Constantinople, and in fact to act as his Chief of Staff and Intelligence Officer combined. At this time Sir Alfred Sandison occupied the post of Chief Dragoman. I have already mentioned that he was Mrs Blunt's brother. The second Dragoman, Marinitch, was an Austrian subject, but an industrious and conscientious servant of British interests. He dealt chiefly with commercial matters, while Sandison looked after the political side. The third Dragoman, A. Block, a Vice-Consul, divided his energies between the two spheres, and was understood to be destined for the post of Chief Dragoman when the present occupant retired. There were also a native clerk for Turkish, and a French clerk attached to the Dragomans' office.

My own functions were those of bottle-washer to the establishment. I read the Turkish newspapers, and noted, or omitted to note, anything that the Ambassador was likely to consider of interest. Marinitch would take me with him on his almost daily visits to the Porte, and try to impart the secrets of the labyrinths where the Turkish Government offices lay hid. When I was able to grope my way about they sent me to hunt for "Pussolas." These are documents obtained from a Registry to indicate the date on which a letter on any given subject has been despatched, and in dealing with the Porte it is essential to obtain them. Otherwise there is no certainty that instructions for pro-

vincial authorities, the promise of which has been obtained with vast pains from a Minister, may not have been consigned " minder alti "—under the sofa cushion,—which is the Turkish equivalent for the European pigeon-hole or waste-paper basket. From time to time they would let me try my prentice hand on some little mission to the Customs or other small fry of the Turkish administration. It was also my privilege to be in attendance at the Embassy when others were keeping holiday, as on Friday, the Mussulman Sabbath, and Sunday, in case the Ambassador should want some one to translate a Turkish letter or anything of the kind. On the whole, it was an existence which presented no particular attraction beyond the flesh-pots and comparative civilisation of the capital.

The Chancery of the Embassy was at this time full of the longest men in the diplomatic service. The Ambassador stood about six feet two inches in his socks, and there were two or three of his staff considerably taller than he. The duties of the secretaries were almost entirely clerical—copying despatches, ciphering telegrams, and so on; and as the Chancery was only open from 10 A.M. to 1 P.M. they had some time for necessary relaxation. In the absence of a native court in the European sense of the word, and as the Turks in general kept entirely to themselves, each foreign embassy formed a little court in itself, round which clustered its nationals and such natives—Armenians and Greeks—as had social ambitions. To frequent Embassy entertainments, and to have even the lesser lights of diplomacy accept invitations to their own dances and dinners,

was the ideal of the Constantinople climbers, with the result that the Embassy secretaries lived in an atmosphere of continual adulation which was not good for them.

The Ambassador, Sir William White, had a remarkable career. His public service began in the lowly position of clerk to the British Consulate at Warsaw, and by sheer hard work and ability he had attained to what was then one of the most important posts of diplomacy. With no outside backing, no influential friends, no money, nothing to recommend him but his own merits, to force his way into and succeed in a close corporation like the British diplomatic service was a task to daunt the boldest. Sir William White had done it, aided only by one bit of luck in that he happened to be Consul-General at Belgrade at the time when Servia was raised from a Principality to a Kingdom, and his claim to be promoted to Minister could hardly be ignored. Physically a very big man, with a loud voice, a blunt manner, and a rugged aspect, he was the very antithesis of the stereotyped diplomatist, and in the conflict which raged at the conference of ambassadors in Constantinople over the Eastern Roumelian question, his methods may have caused pain to his more sophisticated foreign colleagues. But he successfully maintained the British point of view against all comers, and held the ring for the Bulgarians to work out their own salvation.

Work was his sole occupation, and wallowing in the Eastern Question his one amusement. Of everything connected with the usual occupations of Englishmen, particularly games of all sorts, he was

extraordinarily ignorant. On one occasion when petitioned by his secretaries to consent to the chancery being closed at eleven so as to allow them to take part in a cricket match, after some humming and hawing he finally flabbergasted them with the contemptuous words, "Oh, take your rackets and go to your game of ball." But being a kind-hearted man with a great sense of public duty, he turned up on the ground in the afternoon, to be bored for an hour or two by the, to him, incomprehensible antics of the players.

I had not disported myself much more than a couple of months at the Embassy when I was agreeably surprised by the announcement that some one was wanted in a hurry to take charge of the Consulate at Erzeroum, and that I, being nearest to hand, was to have the job. I could learn little more about the place than that it was abominably cold there in winter, and that the shooting was fair. Also that there was trout-fishing in the neighbourhood. But the prospect of being on my own even for a limited time was so attractive that I should have jumped at the opportunity of going anywhere on earth on such terms. Not that they gave me the chance of declining. I was simply told to take myself off by the first boat, which happened to be an Austrian-Lloyd steamer sailing for Trebizond within the week. The Company did not devote its choicest craft to the Black Sea Service, and the vessel which carried me and my fortunes was a slow and aged cargo-boat with limited accommodation for passengers. The saloon was pretty full, chiefly with American missionaries, a race with which I now made ac-

quaintance for the first time, but of which I was destined to see much in the future. There were half a dozen couples on board, all coming out for the first time, and all newly wed. It was believed in the ship that the matches were arranged by the society which sent them out without consulting the parties concerned, each male missionary being told off to proceed to such and such a destination, and simultaneously to espouse such and such a lady missionary, and *vice versa.* But nowhere are more untruths current than on shipboard, and it is quite likely that this was merely a theory propounded to explain the amazing incongruity of some of the unions. Poor creatures, one could not but feel for them as they were dumped down in the various ports the ship touched at along the Black Sea coast, to find their way, with winter coming on, to their several destinations in a strange country, there to minister for the next ten years or so to the spiritual needs of so uninspiring a race as the Armenians. However, they went off cheerfully enough, and I was getting too anxious about my own journey to spare much pity for others.

On the fifth day out from Constantinople the ship arrived at Trebizond, a picturesque little town which was once the capital of the kingdom of Trebizond, the last Greek State to fall before the conquering Turk, and surviving even Constantinople. The Consul kindly put me up for the two days of my stay there, and told off his Dragoman to make the necessary preparations for the road. The Dragoman's ideas on the subject of commissariat were not generous, and all he provided for a week's journey

were three loaves of bread and a cold joint, which he called a "mutton-leg." He asserted that the road led through a land flowing with milk and honey, and that the best of fare was to be found at the hans on the way. As means of locomotion he selected a closed cab as being more suitable for the time of year than an open vehicle, as bad weather might be met with. In this he was perhaps right, though as a matter of fact neither rain nor snow fell while I was travelling.

Anyhow I set off in my four-wheeler, and a less comfortable journey it has never been my lot to experience. The interior of the carriage was unduly encumbered with luggage, which left little elbow-room for me and my dog. The dog proved to be very susceptible to jolting, which induced nausea in him to an unpleasant extent. I was entirely in the hands of the driver in the matter of selecting stopping-places, and he chose those where fodder was cheapest without regard to other considerations. Once or twice he insisted on stopping short at three in the afternoon, wasting several hours of daylight, and when I expostulated he averred that the next han was many hours' journey farther on, and we could not reach it before night. As I was quite unable to check his statement there was nothing for it but submission. There may have been better hans on the road—indeed this proved to be the case on my return journey next year—but there can hardly have been worse. They were little more than sheds divided up into compartments, indescribably dirty and swarming with predatory insects. Turkish coffee, tough native bread, and mellow eggs were

the only provisions obtainable, unless one could make up one's mind to select a fowl from the hen-roost and wait while it was decapitated, plucked, and scorched before the inn fire for dinner. It may be imagined how thankful I was for the mutton-leg and the few comforts my tea-basket contained.

After leaving Trebizond the road soon begins to ascend and passes over the Zigana Dagh, from some spot on the summit of which the ten thousand Greeks under Xenophon, struggling homewards from Cyrus's unlucky expedition into Persia, caught their first glimpse of the sea and gave vent to their historic exclamation. Thence it descends by gentle degrees into a plateau, and passing the town of Baiburt begins to mount the Kop Dagh. This is a higher and steeper range than the Zigana, and in the depth of winter presents difficulty if not danger to travellers. In October I found snow lying in both passes, but in the intervening country the temperature was pleasant enough, while at Trebizond summer still reigned. The road itself was very well designed, though, like all roads in Turkey, its upkeep was neglected. Being, however, the sole connection between the important fortress of Erzeroum and the sea, it was in better repair than most, and there were no places where a carriage could not easily pass, at any rate in a favourable season. There was little wheeled traffic, but we passed endless caravans of camels transporting European goods to Northern Persia through Erzeroum. I only met one European, a French engineer returning to Trebizond, who stopped and conversed with me for a few minutes. We exchanged

impressions on the subject of the accommodation afforded by the hans, and on my complaining of the unpleasant attentions paid me by the bugs and fleas, he replied with a shudder, "If it were only bugs and fleas!" And indeed when the journey was over and I examined my underclothing I did find there the corpse of a louse, by some extraordinary trick of fortune the only one I have ever seen.

Apart from this brief meeting, my only society for the week was that of the driver and the two gendarmes who served as escort. The road was perfectly safe at this time, but the gendarmes were very useful in securing a room to myself at night, bundling out prior arrivals without ceremony. According to custom, the escort received ten piastres each as honorarium from a traveller for conducting him from their own post to the next, a matter of fifteen or twenty miles. I doubt whether they would have put up much of a fight in case of an emergency. They were armed with Winchester rifles of an ancient pattern evolved in the American Civil War more than twenty years before, and using rim-fire cartridges. I had the curiosity to examine the bandolier of one of them, which he laid aside during a stand-easy, and discovered from the tell-tale indentation in the rim that two-thirds of his cartridges had already missed fire. But the moral effect of their company is good, ensuring due respect and exemption from interference on the part of minor officials in search of backsheesh, and it is always advisable to have them on a journey, as the responsibility for one's safety is thus thrown directly on the Government.

The Kop Dagh once surmounted, the rest of the way to Erzeroum became plain sailing, and the seventh day after leaving Trebizond saw me safely arrived at my destination. The Acting Consul, Devey, had already been there four years, and was naturally in a hurry to get away and enjoy his over-due leave, but he stayed three or four days to introduce me to the Vali and other Turkish officials and show me the ropes, and then went on his way rejoicing. I must confess to experiencing a considerable sinking of the heart when the only Englishman within two hundred miles disappeared into the distance, leaving me to my own devices. There was, however, so much to be done in shaking down into new quarters, making preparations for the winter, and generally taking stock of the situation, that the first feeling of desolation soon passed off.

The lease of Colonel Everett, the Consul's, house had just fallen in, but I was able to get it renewed. The landlord had bought most of the fixtures and let me buy them back, and with the aid of some sticks taken over from Devey, and others found in the town, I managed to provide enough for my modest requirements in the way of furniture. The house was a good one as houses go in that part of the world, with no claim to architectural beauty, but solidly built and warm. Being big enough to hold Colonel Everett, his wife, two children, and a governess, it was far too large for me, and I only attempted to furnish a few rooms. In conformity with local custom the stable was inside the house, opening into the hall, and the horses made their

entrances and exits by the front door. This system helped to keep the house warm in winter, but was apt to lead to unrest at night when a horse broke loose and assaulted its stable companion, as happened from time to time. I should mention that Devey's two horses had been passed on to me, and excellent little beasts they were, though the pair only cost £17. Fodder for the two came to less than £2 a month, and in most respects Erzeroum was a wonderfully cheap place to live in. A notable exception was firewood, which had to be imported from a distance of three days' journey, and consequently cost a fortune. Those who could not afford wood burned "Tezek," stable refuse made up into cakes and dried, which emitted a horrible smoke as well as heat.

My household was on a modest scale, consisting of a cook, Showa, a groom, Tatos, and a Cavass, Miguerditch, all three of them Armenians. Showa had learned her profession under the guidance of Mrs Everett, and was quite a good cook in a limited way. We seldom met, as she was a lady of strong will and forbidding appearance, with whom I thought it more tactful to communicate through an intermediary. On great occasions she wore a gold watch and chain and one black kid glove, gifts from her former mistress, and presented an almost regal aspect. Tatos was a bit of a sneak and misappropriated the horses' fodder, but all grooms do that, and on the whole he was not a bad servant. Miguerditch was an excellent fellow, but his nationality made him useless for the basic duty of a Cavass —to overawe the badly-disposed and protect his

master,—though on occasions he could gird on a sword and do the ceremonial part of the business. He waited at table, and was thoroughly trustworthy.

The Erzeroum Consulate possessed a paid Dragoman, Yussuf Effendi by name, also an Armenian. He had a fair knowledge of English, and was supposed to serve as clerk when required. To this circumstance I attributed his touching anxiety to prevent my overworking myself by addressing unnecessary reports to the Embassy which it might have been his task to copy out. He was fond in this connection of quoting to me the correct attitude of a former Acting Consul. "Mr E.," he would say, "go out shooting ALL the week. Then come home on Saturday and write one very good despatch." But what I most vividly recollect of Yussuf Effendi was the superb obeisance with which he would do me homage on arriving at the Consulate in the morning. It was neither a bow nor a genuflexion, but a complicated blend of the two executed with the hands tightly pressed on the abdomen, and more expressive of loyalty, abasement, and anxiety to be of service than any salute which I have seen in my life.

Colonel Everett was at the time of my arrival still titular Consul at Erzeroum, and remained so until the end of 1887, though the disaster which had befallen him obliged him to leave the country nearly two years before. It was a mysterious affair, and happened in this wise. There were then two Cavasses, Miguerditch and a Turk, who slept on the premises in rotation. On the particular night in question it was Miguerditch's turn to go home,

and the Turk should have remained on duty. Whether he connived at what followed or simply failed in his duty, the fact remains that he absented himself without permission, leaving the groom, an Armenian, to occupy the Cavasses' room on the ground floor. During the evening another Armenian, a man from a village a few miles away and known to the groom, called, and begged the latter to put him up for the night, as he had nowhere to go to. The groom consented, though he had, of course, no business to do so, and the two went to bed. In the middle of the night the groom was awakened by a blow administered by the stranger with a Cavass's sword which hung on the wall, and which unluckily had been sharpened recently. Somehow or other he escaped serious injury and ran screaming upstairs, followed by his assailant still carrying the sword. Colonel Everett, awakened by the noise, came out of his bedroom in his nightshirt, and the Armenian went for him at once; but the Colonel closed with him, and succeeded in wresting the sword from him, though not before receiving severe cuts on his own head and hands. The Armenian then fell on his knees and begged for mercy, declaring that it was all a "mistake," and unluckily the Colonel was taken in by his protestations, and telling him to be off, turned round to enter his room and bind up his wounds. The sword was left lying on the ground, and the rascal picked it up like a flash and renewed his attack, but again with astonishing pluck and determination Colonel Everett closed with him and disarmed him, though terribly cut about in the process. This time Mrs Everett

brought out a loaded revolver and begged her husband to make an end of the brute. But the blood was streaming down into his eyes and his right hand was in ribbons, and the first two shots he fired entered the wall. The third winged the groom, who had remained a spectator of the scene, and as the trigger was pulled for a fourth shot the heavy revolver fell and the bullet entered the Colonel's own ankle, shattering the bone. Had the Armenian come on again there would have been no possibility of further resistance, but his courage now failed him, and he ran downstairs and out of the house. Mrs Everett helped her husband on to his bed, and then went to call a doctor and warn the police, who had no difficulty in finding and arresting the Armenian. At the trial which ensued he made no attempt to deny his guilt, which indeed was undeniable, and he was sentenced to fifteen years' imprisonment, but the motive for the crime remained a mystery. All sorts of theories were current in the town, the most popular being that the Armenian had been suborned by the Russian Consulate to steal maps of the frontier districts known to have been made by Colonel Everett, an expert topographer, and had lost his head and exceeded his instructions. Colonel Everett himself inclined to the belief that robbery was the motive. A sudden attack of homicidal mania would have been an obvious and adequate explanation, but it was not suggested that the man was in any way unsound mentally.

Before leaving Erzeroum I asked the Public Prosecutor in charge of the case, with whom I was on friendly terms, if he could not, now that

the affair was over and done with, let me know privately what the official theory was. He replied that the culprit had confessed and had received the maximum legal penalty, and that the Turkish authorities had not cared to probe the matter further; but he certainly gave me the impression that he knew more than he cared to tell.

Colonel Everett received more than twenty cuts on the head and hands, besides the injury to his leg, which left a permanent lameness; but he recovered, and in a month or two was well enough to be carried in a litter to Trebizond, and thence to make his way to England. Though incapacitated for active military service, he subsequently became Professor of Topography at the Staff College, and then Assistant Director of Military Intelligence.

The British Consulate at Erzeroum was hardly maintained for the comfort and protection of the British subjects resident there, for I found only one, and he a naturalised Armenian. A little later my colony was trebled by the return of the Rev. W. Chambers and his wife, who ran the inevitable American Mission to the Armenians, but were themselves of Canadian origin. Other foreign communities were equally limited in numbers. An Italian chemist represented Italy as Consular Agent, and the quarantine doctor was also of Italian nationality, both of them, however, born in Turkey, and, with their families, as much native as European in their ways. Two or three Catholic priests composed the French colony. They had no consular representative, but enjoyed the protection of the Russian Consulate-General. The Russians were more

numerous, that is to say, Russian subjects from the Caucasus—Circassians, Georgians, and Armenians,—for I do not remember there being any genuine Russians outside the Consulate-General. The Consul-General was absent, and the Vice-Consul, Preobragensky, quite a young man, in charge. We became excellent friends—indeed, it would have been absurd to be otherwise, as neither of us had any one else to consort with, nor was there any local political question which might embitter the personal relations of Muscovite and Briton. We had a third colleague (the Italian did not count, for his official position was purely nominal) in the shape of a Persian Consul-General, a not very civilised individual, of whom we saw but little, as his time was fully taken up with extracting a living from the Persian community. I have no reason to believe that he received any salary at all; but the number of Persian traders, muleteers, and camel-drivers established in Erzeroum or passing through was so considerable that, in spite of the cruel handicap imposed by a recent decree of the Porte which forbade the practice of torture by Persian Consuls in the Ottoman dominions, he managed to make a very good thing out of his post. Even the Persian Ambassador at Constantinople lives, or at any rate used to live, by what may euphemistically be termed the "fees" paid by his countrymen, just as does the Governor of a Province in Persia itself.

After settling down in the house, my first care was to sample the shooting. This proved to be rather disappointing on account of the lateness of the season, for it was now the beginning of Novem-

ber, and the birds were migrating southwards. One of the branches of the Euphrates, the Kara Sou, has its source in the mountains north-west of Erzeroum, and as it runs through the plain forms a marsh perhaps a couple of miles broad, which in August, September, and October is the haunt of snipe and innumerable varieties of duck, and very good sport can be obtained. But the first time I went most of the snipe were already gone, the duck were on the move, and the bag consisted mainly of the lesser bustard, of which large flocks still remained. The great bustard was there too, but neither then or on any subsequent occasion have I been able to approach near enough to these wary birds to justify a shot. I went again three or four days afterwards, and found the marsh still emptier. Then the snow fell, both stream and marsh were frozen solid, and one could ride across the plain with ease.

The rigour of the winter was something appalling.

The town of Erzeroum stands 6200 feet above the level of the sea, at the north-western end of a plain about ten miles long by six wide, and all around are hills one or two thousand feet higher. When a good strong wind is blowing from the north or east no one who can afford to stay indoors would think of going out, but on still days the cold dry atmosphere is not unpleasant. I cannot say what the temperature actually was, for the minimum marked on my thermometer was only zero Fahrenheit, and the quicksilver remained at zero in the shade for days together, not being able to go any lower. For five solid months the plain was one

sheet of snow whose dazzling whiteness was only relieved by dirty smudges betokening villages. Not a tree appeared, for all had been cut down for fuel during the occupation by the Russians nine years before. Inside the town the snow became a positive nuisance, for no means was provided of getting rid of it. After every fall it had to be shovelled off the flat roofs of the houses into the streets below, and where these were narrow, as was generally the case, the mound in the middle rose so high that a pedestrian passing along the narrow track which gave access to the doorways could not even see the head of any one walking on the other side. The town lay on a slope, and when this accumulation dissolved at the end of the winter an involuntary spring cleaning occurred as the torrents of melted snow swept the year's conglomeration of filth with them into the plain. A sudden and intensive thaw had been known to produce a flood in which men were actually carried away and drowned; but such accidents are attributed to the will of Allah, and are not sufficient to stimulate a Turkish municipality into any impious display of energy.

The better-class houses were provided with double doors and windows to keep the cold out, while in the poorer dwellings an attempt was made to produce the same effect by pasting layers of paper over the windows and any crevices there might be. In their darkened hovels, with the vitiated atmosphere and the fumes of tezek, the existence of the proletariat, whether Moslem or Christian, must have been joyless in the extreme. The vast majority

could neither read nor write, and Heaven only knows how they passed their time apart from drinking coffee and gossiping. Even in the summertime there was never any merry-making or public amusement so far as I could see, and from autumn to spring the town seemed dead. Taking it altogether there can be few gloomier places to reside in than Erzeroum.

The population was somewhere in the region of forty thousand, Mussulmans largely predominating. Turks and Armenians mixed very little, but no animosity was apparent between the two elements, the former usually maintaining towards the latter the attitude of contemptuous toleration which is habitual to them in normal times, and the Armenians only too glad to be allowed to live their wretched lives in peace. And yet before ten years had passed, when the hint came from Constantinople, the Turks of Erzeroum rose up and cheerfully slaughtered their Christian fellow-townsmen—not, indeed, on so wholesale a scale as occurred in some other towns, but still to a sufficiently terrible extent. The fanaticism may be latent, but it is always there, and ready to explode when the match is applied. To see the shapeless bundles of clothes which were Turkish women toddling along the streets, no one would imagine them capable of energetic action of any kind, much less of atrocity; nevertheless after the last desperate effort of the Russians in 1878 to take the Devé Boyoun Pass, these same bundles sallied out of the town in hundreds to mutilate and murder the unfortunate Russian wounded.

CHAPTER IV.

ERZEROUM—*continued.*

THE Vali of Erzeroum at this time was Mustapha Pasha, who in his younger days had been nicknamed "Phosphor" from the vivacity of his disposition. But he was now very old, and though the nickname remained the briskness was only a matter of tradition. He was not a bad governor, and indeed the Turkish official of the old school, who in long years of service has acquired at least some practical if antiquated idea of administration, has always seemed to me more satisfactory to deal with than the bumptious type of man who is succeeding him, and who, while speaking French and professing to be modern, has lost most of the primitive qualities of the race without acquiring in their place more than a veneer of civilisation. Phosphor's *bête noire* was education, which he rightly considered incompatible with the peaceful maintenance of a régime such as prevailed in Turkey; but he was quite willing to leave the Armenians unmolested, provided they were content to remain in the station in which they were born. Had the occasion occurred in his time, he would certainly have done his best

to harry them out of the land as soon as they showed any disposition to raise their heads.

He was a great stickler for politeness, even to Christians, and I heard of his rebuking the lack of it in the following manner. A deputation of Turks waited on him to complain that their women-folk were incommoded by the presence of too many Armenian women at the bath on the day that it was reserved for females. They began, "Hasha boundan, Giaour karilari," meaning "Saving your presence" (or "Excuse our mentioning it"), "the infidel women——" when the Vali broke in, telling them to be off and wash their lips. The deputation withdrew, and consulted as to what they could have said wrong, but finding no answer to the question returned to the presence. "Hasha boundan, Giaour karilari," the spokesman began again; but they were driven away a second time with the reiterated request to retire and wash their lips. The bewildered delegates thereupon begged the Vali's secretary to ascertain where their fault lay, and he returned with the message that "Hasha boundan" was uncalled for as a preface to the mention of any subjects of the Sultan whatever their religion might be, while it was grossly impolite to talk of "infidel women," the correct term being "Christian ladies."

I probably had not occasion to see the Vali more than once a month, and then for purely official purposes, but with Moussa Pasha, the General commanding the troops, and the next most important man in the place, my relations were of a much more intimate and friendly character. He was a dear old man, gentle in manner and kind of heart, but a

redoubtable fighter withal. In his youth (he was a Circassian) he had served with distinction in the Russian Army, and taken part in hostilities against Turkey in the Crimean war. Afterwards he resigned his Russian commission, entered the Turkish Army, and fought against Russia in the war of 1877-78. The Armenians adored him, and looked on him as a protector; he was well liked by the Turks, and in fact universally popular. It was always a pleasure to call on Moussa Pasha and listen to his stories of old forgotten far-off things and battles long ago.

Another Turk of whom I saw something socially was Halid Pasha, who commanded the artillery. He had a passion for the card game known locally as "otouz bir"—*i.e.*, thirty-one—which was simply the venerable Vingt-et-un with an imaginary ten attached to it, and from time to time he would send word to me that he proposed to come round to my house in the evening to play, and would bring in his train three or four Armenians whom he named, sycophants who had attached themselves to his person. These parties were not much fun. The Pasha played fairly enough, as I hope I did myself, but the sycophants cheated shamelessly. There was no pretence about it, and it was up to the dealer to detect and checkmate any malpractices he could. There was one Catholic Armenian who annoyed me extremely by invariably starting the evening with the demand for the loan of a pound, on the pretext that he had forgotten his purse. He always repaid my pound at the end of the sitting, and went off jingling three or four others which he had won from the Pasha and myself, so

I found the transaction both humiliating and expensive.

The winter was not far advanced when an Inspector of the Public Debt, whose acquaintance I had made in Salonica, arrived in Erzeroum. He was a great acquisition, as now Preobragensky and I were able to play dummy bridge of an evening. Our usual practice was to devote the time until midnight to bridge, and then to conclude with a Russian game called "Préférence" as a concession to Preobragensky. Without this resource I do not think I could have stood the deadly monotony of the winter. Books were unprocurable unless one ordered them from England, a matter of two months; and newspapers were soon read, even when the weekly post from Trebizond got through, and it was often held up for a week or a fortnight by snow on the road. The long nights would have been purgatory but for cards.

The daytime was easier to get through. Without offending Yussuf Effendi's ideas of what was proper, there was still a modicum of work, which helped to pass the time. Preobragensky did not care for riding, but he could be induced to take an occasional walk. At other times Dr Aslanian, the naturalised British subject already mentioned, would accompany me. He was an M.R.C.S. of London, and it was due to his skill in surgery that Colonel Everett recovered from his wounds. While in England he had become a Quaker, and was one of the most timid men I have ever met, obsessed with fears of massacre and outrage; and when later on these fears seemed likely to be realised he lost no time in migrating to

Persia, where I found him in 1903. Mr and Mrs Chambers were charming people, and I was always assured of a welcome in their house. Sometimes Mrs Chambers would accompany me for a ride, but she and her husband were too busy with the work of their mission to be often available as companions, so my rides were usually solitary. There was not much choice of direction, as only the two highroads were practicable for riding in winter—that running eastwards towards Kars through the Devé Boyoun Pass, and the Trebizond road. The latter was the most attractive, for, about eight or nine miles away, near the village of Ilidja, a number of hot springs issued from the ground and formed a little marsh which was never entirely frozen over. This was frequented by some eccentric snipe and duck, which had elected to pass the winter there instead of migrating with their more conservative fellows, and it was generally possible to shoot one or two to vary Showa's menu and to afford an object for a ride.

In February my evil genius prompted me to go bear-shooting. I think that the idea must have been suggested originally by Yussuf Effendi, who desired an excursion to relieve the monotony of his clerical duties. He certainly assured me that in the far end of the district of Tortoum, due north of Erzeroum and about half-way between that town and the Black Sea, bears were to be found in profusion and shot under exceptionally easy conditions. Probably he knew nothing whatever about the matter, but circumstances did not allow me either to confirm or confute his statements. We

started early one morning, Yussuf, Tatos, and I, riding straight across the plain and then ascending a track up the mountains on the other side. Beasts of burden constantly going up and down and treading in the same place had worn the path into a peculiar formation resembling a ladder, the untrodden parts representing the rungs, and it was impossible to go at any pace beyond a walk, and even so our unaccustomed horses stumbled continually. It was glorious weather, but the glare of the sun on the snow proved very trying after a time and affected my eyes most unpleasantly. There was also a keen north wind blowing, and this, combined with the sun, raised blisters on my nose and ears which were exceedingly irritating. Altogether the ride was by no means enjoyable, and after eight hours' plodding we were glad enough to put up for the night at a village half-way to our final destination.

Hospitality to travellers is a duty invariably recognised by the Turks, and in most villages something in the shape of a guest-house is provided for their entertainment, the mosque being used in the last resort. In this particular village a raised platform at the end of the cattle stable belonging to the headman served as hotel, and was cordially put at my disposal by the owner, who also entertained us sumptuously at dinner. The elders of the village were invited to meet us and partake of the really excellent food provided, of which the *pièces de résistance* were a stew of partridges, and pilaf. A large raw onion, to be nibbled as a relish between the courses, was served out to each diner, who was

also provided with a quire of the thin native bread, and a piece of this made quite an efficient scoop or spoon. For the rest, the time-honoured principle that fingers were made before forks prevailed. Conversation on such occasions is not encouraged, and the guests devoted themselves wholeheartedly to the consumption of food, staring stolidly at me during the intervals. Even when dinner was over and the customary *feu de joie* of eructations had been fired in compliment to the host and as testimony to the copiousness of his dinner, there was little talking beyond a few lies told by Yussuf Effendi with metropolitan assurance, and swallowed as gospel by his simple audience. I began to feel sleepy, and said I was tired and would like to go to bed, so Tatos was sent for and put up my camp-bed. No one budged, not even when Tatos pulled off my boots and I began slowly to undress. In the end I had to disrobe completely under the curious eyes of the village elders, who themselves never took off more than their outer garments at night, and were entranced to watch the *coucher* of a distinguished foreigner. It was only when I was actually in bed that they trooped out, leaving me to get what sleep was allowed by the attentions of the fleas and the unrestfulness of the sixteen cows and oxen which shared the stable with us.

We passed a poor night, even Yussuf, who had much less than his fair share of the fleas, and were easily persuaded to stay and rest another day before continuing our journey. Indeed, our host discouraged any further progress at all, first on the ground that there were no bears, and secondly because the

bears were terribly fierce and more likely to destroy us than we them. The truth probably was that in some way or other he feared that we might get into trouble and he be held responsible. Yussuf also began to hedge, and hinted at bad men lurking in Tortoum to rob and kill the stranger. Not that he cared for his own safety, of course, but he felt considerable anxiety on my account. The final decision was postponed till the evening, and meanwhile our host's son with two other young Turks conducted me on to the hills in pursuit of red-legged partridges. There were lots of these birds about, but after the manner of their kind they refused to rise unless absolutely cornered, and to make anything of a bag one was reduced to the painful necessity of shooting them running. The weather conditions of the previous day still prevailed, and my eyes became worse and worse until I could hardly see out of them, and was already thinking of returning when the Turks said, "Look, Effendi, look. Partridges, shoot." Dimly discerning two objects which appeared to be slightly moving on the top of a rock, and suspecting no treachery, I raised my gun and fired. The report was followed by piercing shrieks as two Armenians leaped from the other side of the rock behind which they had been sitting to shelter from the wind. It was the top of their fezes which I had seen, and which the rascally Turks had told me were partridges. The Turk is by nature a staid individual, not often indulging in any outward manifestation of his emotions, but on this occasion my followers let themselves go, literally rolling on the ground in enjoyment of the exquisite jest.

Fortunately the damage done to the Armenians was slight—a few pellets of No. 6 shot in their scalps,—and on my presenting them with a mejidieh (three and fourpence) each as blood-money, they joined hands and danced joyfully before me, even declaring their readiness to serve as target again at the same price. But I had a great fright, and was glad to hasten back to the village before something worse happened.

Next morning I was practically blind, and there was nothing for it but to return to Erzeroum. It was a melancholy and painful ride back, but my horse played up nobly, and we reached the town without mishap. A week's seclusion under the care of Dr Aslanian made my eyes as well as ever.

In justice to Erzeroum, of whose capabilities as a pleasure resort I have given but a gloomy picture, it is only fair to say that during my sojourn there two entertainments were given at which I was privileged to attend. The first was at the house of one of the wealthier Armenians, who asked me to spend the evening, and added that there would be dancing. I duly presented myself after dinner, and was rather surprised to notice the complete absence of ladies in the reception-room. The men, all of them Christians, were between twenty and thirty in number, but no provision seemed to be made for partners. Coffee, brandy, and cigarettes were handed round and consumed in silence by the company seated on divans along the walls, after which the master of the house advanced into the centre of the room and gravely executed an elaborate *pas seul* which did credit to his agility, for he was a

middle-aged man. One of the guests then obliged, by request—an equally spirited performance; but I can give no account of what followed, for I took my leave on the pretext of sudden indisposition, being really in a state of extreme nervousness lest I should be called on to tread a measure myself.

The other occasion was when the Persian Consul-General invited Preobragensky and myself to witness a camel-fight. He received us in the house of one of his colony, from the first-floor windows of which we gazed at the performance in the square below, drinking tea and consuming sweetmeats in the intervals. There were a dozen male camels, each under the charge of his owner or driver—fine beasts in their shaggy winter coats and gaudy trappings,—and three or four females to furnish the motive for a quarrel. The procedure was for two males and a female to be led into the middle of the arena together, when the gladiators would grunt defiance at each other, blowing from their mouths great yellow bubbles, which burst with an evil smell, and straddling their ungainly legs till they could hardly maintain their balance. Meanwhile the lady looked on superciliously with the occasional interjection of a contemptuous remark, which finally had the desired effect of goading her swains into action. They first endeavoured to bite, but as a piece of cord was bound tightly round their jaws to prevent any serious damage being done to such valuable beasts, the combat soon degenerated into a wrestling match. The sight of these antediluvian creatures struggling in the snow and almost tying their long necks into knots in the attempt to heave

the antagonist off his feet was extraordinarily comic; nor was the ludicrous effect lessened by the alacrity with which one or the other would suddenly recognise that he was outmatched and break the clinch to lumber off, pursued by the jeers of his lost love.

The necessary touch of tragedy was added in the fourth encounter, when one camel had the luck to slip his muzzle sufficiently to seize his adversary by the ear and bite it off, to the intense grief of the owner, who blubbered piteously as he led his beast away. After this accident not all the curses and threats of the Consul-General could induce the remaining proprietors to bring their animals up to the scratch, and the meeting broke up in confusion. Our sincere thanks to our colleague for a very pleasant afternoon were received by him with greater complacency than the facts warranted, for he had commandeered camels, house, and refreshments, and had not been put to a single penny of expense.

It seemed as though the winter would never come to an end. Early in March there was another very heavy fall of snow, which caught and overwhelmed a large caravan while passing over the Kop Dagh; and it was not until April was well advanced that anything in the shape of a thaw occurred. When the snow started melting in earnest the streets became for the time almost impassable, but this year the thaw was gradual, and there was no flood. By the end of April the plain was free from snow, the marsh along the course of the Kara Sou became one immense sheet of water, the playground of in-

numerable wild-fowl back from the South, and spring had arrived.

From May until the beginning of October the climate of Erzeroum is pleasant enough, being free from excessive heat and not unhealthy. A few years later the town suffered severely from epidemics of cholera and smallpox, but the climate can hardly be held responsible for such visitations any more than for the slaughter of Armenians. There was a certain amount of malaria, though not of a virulent type, and naturally the filthy conditions prevailing in the town encouraged typhoid and other diseases which thrive on defective sanitation; but I personally had nothing to complain of on the score of health.

Early in the summer the Russian Consul-General, General Dennet, returned from leave, and Preobragensky left us, to my great regret. The Consul-General's *ménage* was a peculiar one, modelled rather on Oriental than on Western practice, and gave occasion to much jocular and unseemly remark amongst the Turks. The absolute disregard of appearances and contempt for public opinion shown by many Russian officials in the East is one of their most striking characteristics, but none of them in my experience kept so outrageous an establishment as General Dennet. However, apart from his moral peculiarities, he was pleasant enough to deal with.

The motive of the Russian Government in selecting an officer of the General Staff as their representative in a strategic centre so near to the frontier as Erzeroum was obvious enough. The appointment

of a British officer as Consul in the same place was not solely in the nature of a retort courteous, but was also part of the general scheme initiated in 1878 for the supervision of the "reforms" promised by the Porte in the Cyprus Convention in return for a British guarantee of the integrity of the Ottoman Dominions in Asia Minor. Her Majesty's Government held that military men would be able to exercise more efficient control over the situation than civilians, and in pursuance of this idea officers of the British Army were scattered in various Consular capacities throughout Anatolia. Ten years' experience had, however, proved that the measure of reform introduced under the eye of the military amounted to exactly what it would have been without them—that is to say, nothing at all. The British Government withdrew their guarantee, but without feeling called on to return the island of Cyprus, which had been handed over to Great Britain in order to render the guarantee more effective; and the military Consulates and Vice-Consulates gradually disappeared. By 1888 Erzeroum alone of them remained, and even here Colonel Chermside, who was now appointed to succeed Colonel Everett, proved to be the last of his race.

Some time elapsed between the date of his appointment and his arrival in Erzeroum—a delay which gave me no reason to grumble, as existence in summer was by no means disagreeable, and for the first and last time in my official experience the cheapness of living enabled me to put by money.

Premonitory symptoms of the Armenian Question were now appearing. The first I heard of it was

when calling on the Vali to talk to him about a complaint of the missionaries that letters addressed to them from other towns in the province were opened at local post-offices. Phosphor admitted that there might be something in the complaint. "Anarchists" in Russia, he said, were known to be inciting the Armenian subjects of the Sultan to rebellion against their lawful sovereign, and the Turkish authorities had in consequence to keep a watch on correspondence. Education, of course, was at the bottom of it all. All the same, he would give orders that letters addressed to British subjects were to be respected in future.

It must be confessed that the old gentleman's apprehensions seemed to me far-fetched. The impression I had gathered of the Armenians was that they offered about as promising soil for the sowing of sedition as a flock of sheep. But events proved that he was right, and that Armenian secret societies working from a secure base in the Caucasus were already preparing untold misery for their helpless compatriots in Turkey.

A month or so afterwards Chambers came to me in a great state of perturbation, to say that an Armenian teacher in the mission school had been consigned to prison, and to beg me to get him out. It appeared that the Turks had obtained possession of a composition in which one of the boys embodied a passionate appeal to the Armenians—a hundred thousand was the number he considered necessary—to rise and throw off the Turkish yoke. To make matters worse, the master to whom this literary effort was submitted, instead of tearing it up or reporting

its author to the head of the mission, as was his obvious duty, had simply handed it back with corrections, and could not deny his handwriting. His arrest on a charge of sedition was the natural sequel. I fear that Chambers thought my refusal to intervene a sign of hard-heartedness, but there was no possible ground for interference, and to make an appeal which was foredoomed to rejection would have only made matters worse. The teacher was still in custody when I left Erzeroum, and I never heard what finally became of him. The rash essayist, who was arrested at the same time, died before long in prison of typhoid fever.

One morning in June a letter was brought to me from Sir W. White introducing the Military Attaché to the Austrian Embassy at Constantinople, who proposed to stay a few days in Erzeroum, and requesting me to do everything to make his stay a pleasant one. This of course implied putting him up, so I gave orders for the necessary preparations, and waited with not unpleasurable anticipation for the arrival of the visitor, who, so the messenger informed me, was only an hour or so behind him. When the carriage drove up to my door, it was with decidedly mixed feelings that I noted the presence of an attractive young lady in it as well as a man. This proved to be the Austrian's newly-wedded wife, who accompanied him, so he informed me, because they did not care to be separated so soon after marriage. I was in for it, and had to do the best my limited resources allowed for the comfort and entertainment of the pair. Fortunately no guests could have been easier to please and less

exacting. They were out to enjoy themselves, and apparently succeeded in doing so, even in so unpromising a spot for a honeymoon as Erzeroum. At times their frank indulgence in connubialities was a little embarrassing to a young and modest host, but on the whole the visit of this light-hearted pair afforded me great pleasure.

But if I was gratified, it was far otherwise with the Russian Consul-General, who fell victim to a perfect agony of curiosity and suspicion regarding the motives which could have induced an Austrian officer to trespass on a Russian preserve so far removed from any Austrian sphere of interest. The Military Attaché made no attempt to conceal the object of his visit, which, apart from the natural wish to enjoy a jaunt at the expense of his Government, was to have a look at the new system of forts recently completed by the Turks in the Devé Boyoun Pass. But this explanation failed to satisfy General Dennet, convinced as he was that behind it lurked some dark design against the interests of Holy Russia, and in consequence my guest and I were carefully shadowed whenever we ventured out of the house. We devoted one day to riding round the forts and checking their positions on a map which the Austrian had brought with him from Constantinople, and at every turn we ran up against some emissary of the Russian Consulate-General whose efforts to appear unconcerned under our amused scrutiny were rather comic.

By the time my guests left, rumours were already rife concerning the imminent arrival of Colonel Chermside. As a matter of fact, he did not appear

for nearly a month, but the uncertainty prevented any prolonged excursions. I did pay a hurried visit to the Tortoum river, but found it in flood, owing to the late melting of the snow, and all that could be done was to pick up a few trout with the worm in eddies and backwaters. When the river is in a suitable condition for the fly the fishing is by all accounts first-class, the trout being quite unsophisticated and running large. I was assured that an Armenian bishop in Tortoum, a great sportsman, was in the habit of visiting the river by night with a torch, which he would hold over the water to attract the big trout and then smite them over the head with a sword, and so capture them. But I had no opportunity of seeing the prelate at work.

Colonel Chermside finally turned up, and I was free to go a week after. This time I sent my baggage in advance and rode, taking no more with me than Tatos and I could carry on our horses. Whether it was the lovely weather, or the being independent of the vagaries of a coachman, or the delight of escaping from Erzeroum, or the combination of all three, the journey back proved much more enjoyable, as it was certainly more expeditious, than my first experience of the same road. There being no inducement to linger in the hans on the way, we made a practice of starting at three in the morning or thereabouts, resting during the midday heat, and then riding until sunset, and reached Trebizond on the night of the fourth day, a clear gain of two days over the carriage.

CHAPTER V.

SMYRNA.

AFTER a short interlude in the British Consulate-General at Constantinople I was appointed Vice-Consul at Smyrna, and arrived there in November 1888. A more complete change from Erzeroum—with its British colony of three persons, its remote situation, and its dreary winter—than Smyrna, the premier trading centre in Turkey, a flourishing port, and the most populous town in Turkey after Constantinople, could hardly be imagined. The province of Aidin, of which it is the capital, is the most productive district in the Ottoman Empire, raising important quantities of figs, raisins, grain, valonea, &c., and, what is rare in Asia Minor, possessing the means of transporting its products to the sea in the shape of two railways—the Smyrna-Aidin line to the south, and the Smyrna-Cassaba to the north of the town. Both these lines were then British-owned (the second passed out of our hands a few years later), the lion's share of the trade fell to Great Britain, and the British community, if not the most numerous, was certainly the most prosperous and influential amongst the foreigners of the place. Smyrna has for centuries possessed a peculiar at-

traction for foreigners and Christians, so much so as to earn from the Turks the name of Giaour Izmir —Infidel Smyrna. As everywhere else in Turkey, the exact population of the town was a matter of conjecture, but the usual estimate of 250,000 cannot have been far out. Whether Turks outnumbered Greeks or Greeks Turks was a moot point, but neither had an absolute majority in the town when the considerable foreign, Armenian, and Jewish elements were also taken into consideration.

Smyrna, with its extensive quays and modern port, offered a fair enough aspect to any one arriving by sea, but the streets behind were narrow and tortuous, and the town itself dirty in winter and horribly stuffy during the summer, when the temperature often exceeds 100° in the shade. As a place of residence the town was far from pleasing, and most of those who conveniently could took houses outside in the suburbs, along the shore of the gulf, or in the villages of Boujah and Bournabat, four or five miles from the town, and connected with it by rail. Lord Byron lived at Boujah when he visited Turkey a hundred years ago, and the avenue is still pointed out where he was accustomed to amuse himself with pistol-practice. I tried the village for a few months, but finding it dull migrated to Bournabat, where most of the English people lived, and where existence was much more lively. Here there were tennis courts, a football club, and an agreeable English society in whose midst I spent my leisure time most pleasantly, going to town every morning by train and returning in the afternoon when the day's work was done.

The Consulate buildings were in a sad condition. There was a large private residence for the Consul-General, offices, a court, a chapel, and a post-office, and it would be difficult to say which department gave the impression of greatest decrepitude. The whole had been taken over by the Foreign Office from the Levant Company when that institution surrendered its charter in 1825, and, judging from appearances, had not since undergone repair. However, it was now at last condemned, and the process of gradual demolition and reconstruction continued during the whole of my three years in Smyrna, enveloping the establishment in an atmosphere of dust and noise which was the reverse of pleasant.

Holmwood, the Consul-General, had only a few months before been transplanted from Zanzibar to Turkey. The surroundings were entirely new to him, and he was consequently quite content to leave the Vice-Consul to run the office after his own fashion. Long residence in a tropical climate had also afflicted him with a liver complaint necessitating an annual cure at Carlsbad, so for the greater part of each summer I was left entirely to my own devices. During his residence in Africa the Consul-General had accumulated a store of yarns relating to his adventures in that mysterious continent which won him the sobriquet of Truthful Freddy, on the *lucus a non lucendo* principle; but he met his match in his Austrian colleague, who had also been in Africa, and whose stock story of how he was in the habit of tying up his little son as a bait to entice by infant wailings the crocodiles of the Nile to emerge from the river and fall victims to the unerring gun of

the sire, was generally adjudged superior to anything that Holmwood's experience or imagination could evolve.

In addition to the Consul-General and Vice-Consul, a Chaplain, three Clerks, a Dragoman, and three Cavasses made up the staff of the Consulate, which had also attached to it a British Seamen's Hospital in charge of an English surgeon, and a post-office, quite an extensive establishment as Consulates go. There was, however, a good deal of work to do. The British colony was a large one, and in those days some four hundred British steamers visited the port every year, and usually remained quite sufficient time discharging and loading cargo to afford ample opportunity for their crews to get into trouble ashore.

The British seaman was then wretchedly paid. An A.B. earned no more than £3, 10s. per month, and naturally the class of man attracted by so meagre a wage was far from high. But even had they been a collection of plaster saints, the Merchant Shipping Act lays down such elaborate regulations to ensure the welfare of the sailor abroad that no Consul in a busy port need complain of lack of occupation. The Act seems inspired throughout by the idea that the master, and the owner he represents, are out to cheat and bully the seaman, and in pursuance of this conviction insists that no transaction between the parties shall take place without the cognisance and sanction of a Consular officer. When a seaman is signed on a ship's articles, or discharged with or without his consent, it must be in the presence of a Consul, who sees that the master

pays him his just due, mothers him until he gets another ship, provides him when sick with hospital treatment, and if necessary sends him home, besides a score of other attentions, which are usually accepted with grumbling distrust by the seaman.

The disposal of sick sailors is often a matter of some difficulty to a Consul in less civilised ports, but at Smyrna things were made easy by the existence of the Seamen's Hospital. Mariners left behind in sound health were boarded out in a Greek inn where the preponderance of vegetables in the menu over meat sometimes gave rise to complaint. However, it was the best we could do for them in the absence of a special establishment for their entertainment. Smyrna did boast of an institution bearing the proud title of "The Sailor's Rest," and maintained by some evangelical body, where Parkinson, a converted ship's carpenter, dispensed tea, coffee, cocoa, and buns to all comers; but his customers were drawn chiefly from the ranks of a small band of Greek Protestants, and the British seaman of the period showed no marked partiality for non-alcoholic beverages.

The British community consisted of nearly two thousand souls, two-thirds of them Maltese and the rest English. The members of the Maltese section were for the most part poor, and a good many of them, I regret to say, disreputable. They constantly quarrelled amongst themselves, got into trouble with the Turkish police, and in one way or another gave the Consulate an infinity of trouble.

The English fell under two categories. There were those born in the British Isles who had come

to Smyrna for various reasons connected with the railways, the gas-works (also a British concern), or for their private business, and who in no way differed from the British colony to be met with in most big towns abroad. These were comparatively few, and quite swamped by the old-established element. The forebears of many of these last had belonged to the defunct Levant Company, and had been settled in Turkey for many generations. In some cases long residence in the East had tended to approximate their way of living to local standards. At Smyrna, as in Constantinople and elsewhere in the Levant, the new arrival notices that the foreigner who has been born and bred in the country, whether he be of British, French, or other nationality, speaks his language with a peculiar accent, and often makes use of phrases which are not current in the land from which he originates. This is perhaps more marked amongst the English than other nationalities, and in Smyrna than in other Turkish towns. Such little peculiarities of speech, hardly if at all perceptible in families whose means allowed them to send their children to school in England, became much more marked as the social scale was descended, until one found a certain number of British subjects for whom Greek had taken the place of English as their ordinary means of expression.

A trifling variation from the language spoken in the British Isles did not in any way imply a falling off in national sentiment; indeed they were, I should say, more exuberantly patriotic than we allow ourselves to appear at home. For the rest, a more warm-hearted, generous, and hospitable set of people than

the Smyrna English I have never met, while as representatives of British commerce they worthily maintained the reputation for integrity which we fortunately enjoy in the East.

One regrettable trait they had, though it was fast disappearing, in the shape of a certain antagonism to authority as personified by the Consulate. I think this was a legacy from the times when the Levant Company appointed its own Consuls, and that its members originally felt some soreness when they lost the privilege, and were inclined to look askance on the officials sent out by the Foreign Office to preside over them. The last member of the company had long been under ground, but the tradition still lingered, and the British community at Smyrna was reputed to have worried two Consuls into their graves during the last thirty years. The only overt manifestation of this tendency which I noticed was a disinclination to register themselves annually at the Consulate as required by the Order in Council for the Ottoman Dominions, or rather to discharge the fee of half-a-crown, payable to H.M.'s Government for the service. They held that this fee was in the nature of a poll-tax, and as such to be resisted by free-born Britishers. Such an attitude was more than unreasonable, considering the privileged position of foreigners in Turkey, who paid no taxes to the Turkish Government, and, in the case of British subjects at least, none to their own. The elder and more sober-minded members of the community grumbled, but submitted. The young bloods, however, one year flatly refused to register, and we were under the painful necessity of sum-

moning some twenty or so of them before the Consular Court to show cause why a fine not exceeding forty shillings should not be inflicted on them according to law. Thereupon the Smyrna Hampdens climbed down, and no more was heard of the matter.

The existence of Consular Courts exercising jurisdiction over their nationals in a foreign and independent country needs a word of explanation. Quite in the early days of the Ottoman Empire its rulers seem to have recognised that special inducements must be held out to foreign Christians to make them willing to take up their residence in a country where the laws and customs differed so fundamentally from their own, and where their presence was desired for the development of trade, and the increase of the State revenues which trade brought with it. In pursuance of this idea special treaties, known as Capitulations, were from time to time made with foreign States by which various privileges were conceded to their subjects, the most valuable of these being the right of having their disputes settled in accordance with their own laws by their own authorities. The Turks, it is true, reserve for the Turkish courts all cases, whether civil or criminal, in which an Ottoman subject is concerned; but even here the interests of a foreigner who has the misfortune to be engaged in litigation with a Turk are to some extent safeguarded by the right of his Consul to be represented at the hearing either in person or, as is more usual, by deputy, and to have a voice in the decision. Turkish justice being what it is, these are very important privileges,

and I for one should be reluctant to reside in Turkey were they abolished.

An Order in Council for the Ottoman Dominions lays down the procedure and defines the jurisdiction of Consular Courts. In criminal cases the Consul sitting alone can inflict up to three months' imprisonment; aided by two assessors taken from the British community his limit is twelve months. Any offence calling for a more severe punishment must be referred to the Supreme Consular Court at Constantinople, presided over by a qualified Judge. The Consul can try any civil case which he does not prefer, owing to its importance or difficulty, to refer to the Supreme Court, to which also appeal lies. Consular Courts are also courts of probate, so in a town like Smyrna, with a large British colony, a passable amount of legal work had to be done.

Looking back, I am inclined to doubt whether my experience was such as to qualify me for presiding over this or any other tribunal; but at the time I undertook it without the slightest diffidence, and I really think that if litigants did not get much law for their money they at least received substantial justice.

I heard from Mr Blunt an amusing instance of a British Consular official adapting the powers conferred by the Order in Council to the needs of his peculiar domestic circumstances. The functionary in question was an Italian Levantine holding the unpaid and purely honorary post of British Vice-Consul in a small port on the Ægean within the district of the Salonica Consulate-General. Great as was the prestige attached to this office amongst

his own little circle, there was one person whom it failed to impress, and that the wife of his bosom, who continually mocked at the Vice-Consul and expressed open contempt for the man. The matter became a public scandal, and his friends warned him that his authority in the place had already begun to suffer and must totally disappear unless he asserted himself. The outraged official, who went in mortal fear of his spouse, determined to overawe her by displaying the majesty of the law, and accordingly summoned her in due form to appear before the Consular Court to answer for her misdeeds ; and in open court, before his applauding friends, he sentenced the scoffer to twenty-four hours' imprisonment in the lavatory, there being no other dungeon available. The poor lady duly served her term in that retreat, with the Vice-Consulate Cavass guarding the door, and came out a contrite and a broken woman.

We had no English lawyers in Smyrna, but two Greek practitioners professed to specialise in the British Consular Court. They could, in fact, speak English fairly well, and had some acquaintance with the provisions of the Order in Council. Both claimed to possess the degree of Doctor of Law, and each assured me privately that his colleague had no right whatever to such a distinction. They referred to one another as "My learned friend," bickered in the most approved fashion, and professed a gratifying respect for the Court. Any deficiency in knowledge of the law was compensated by their power of declamation, and at times they rose to considerable heights of eloquence. "You hurl a bloody

stigma at my client's head," shrieked one when defending a Maltese on a charge of assault. "It strikes him and dishonours him for ever!"

Apart from the occasional granting of probate or letters of administration on the decease of British subjects there was not much civil business in the Court. Criminal affairs were our specialty, generally prosecutions of seamen for offences against discipline under the Merchant Shipping Act, and of Maltese for assaults and other misdemeanours. Sometimes one could not help feeling sympathy with the sailor-men, whose treatment at the hands of master and officers was often rough, and may well have goaded them into insubordination. But authority had to be supported. Generally speaking, the merchant seaman I came across was of a very uninteresting type; but I remember one John Castle, a refractory fireman, who provided a certain amount of entertainment.

He was originally had up for refusing duty and assault, and got three weeks. One would have thought that confinement in a not very attractive cell, with nothing to do but commune with his own thoughts, would induce a somewhat chastened frame of mind in a prisoner, but it was quite otherwise with Mr Castle. When released from prison he blew in on me with the joyful assurance of a music-hall favourite. After giving me a graphic sketch of his career, which included enlistment in and speedy expulsion from both Army and Navy, he turned to a young and smiling clergyman who happened to be in the room, and whom he addressed quite gratuitously as "Mr Dimple," and favoured him

with his opinion of the British Consular Service. "For one Consul that's a gentleman there's forty that's demons," he declared, but expressly excepted me from this sweeping condemnation, which was good of him considering the three weeks. He then demanded the balance of his wages, which had been deposited by his late skipper. I begged him not to take it, but rather to entrust himself to our care until a ship could be found for him; but he insisted, and in the end left with his money in his pocket.

Next morning Parkinson called to complain that John Castle, being in a state of liquor, had come overnight to the Seaman's Rest, broken much crockery and several chairs, and generally behaved in so riotous a manner as to shock the sensitive clients of the establishment. I suggested that he should summon the evildoer before the Court, but this Parkinson could not bring himself to do, on the ground that the Gospel enjoined forgiveness of an adversary unto seventy times seven. On the morrow, however, he again came, reported that a no less inebriated Castle on a second visit had demolished all of the crockery and furniture which had survived the first, and asked for a summons. Reminded that his forgiveness account still showed a debit of four hundred and eighty-nine, he said that he could not help that: he had a duty towards his employers, and would like a summons.

Castle, having spent all his money on riotous living, was quite unable to pay fine and damages, and so perforce retired to another fortnight's seclusion. During this second period of incarceration he

found religion, and advertised the fact by singing through an extensive repertory of hymns in so loud and discordant a voice as to be quite distracting to all on the Consulate premises. Our Chaplain, who in the course of his duties visited the interesting penitent, taxed him with being not for the first time on the religious lay, which John cheerfully admitted; but he continued to cast his vocal bread upon the waters, in the hope that it might one day return to him, as in fact eventually happened. Some pious passers-by, more charitable or less experienced than the Chaplain, were attracted by the voice of the siren, and, impressed by his religious fervour, took charge of him when his time was up and paid his passage to England, to my great relief.

If I remember right, Castle was the last occupant of the old prison, which, when vacated by him, was demolished and a new one built under the new scheme of reconstruction. It was inaugurated by a British marine, not in the capacity of captive, but as an honoured guest. The Levant squadron was in port at the time, and one afternoon I received a call from two Royal Marine Artillerymen who had a request to make. They said that their pal, whom they had left downstairs, was grievously overcome by liquor, and would I allow him to sleep it off in one of my nice new cells until it was time to catch the leave boat and return on board? After inspecting the patient, I ventured to express a doubt whether it were humanly possible for one in so helpless a condition to recover and walk down to the quay by 5.30, it then being a little after three. One of the men drew himself proudly up and rebuked my lack

of faith with the words, "Sir, he's not a Blue Marine if he can't!" And the event fully justified this superb confidence in a famous corps. This was not the only time that our prison served a similar beneficent purpose.

The visits of the squadron to Smyrna were fairly frequent at that time. The call of a single man-of-war is usually a sheer delight to a Consul, but the presence of ten or a dozen in his port at once is apt to be overwhelming. Official visits have to be arranged, amusement on shore found for hordes of officers, advice given as to shooting-grounds in the season, and there is always anxiety lest the exuberance of the lower deck may cause trouble in the town. The man-of-war's-man thirty odd years ago exercised more self-restraint than his fathers, but was still far from attaining the high standard of behaviour which characterises the Royal Navy to-day.

Smyrna was one of the places at which general leave was given, and then the town became excessively lively with several thousand bluejackets on the spree. One very popular form of amusement was to hire a carriage, eject the driver from his position on the box, and then drive the vehicle furiously up and down the quay to the admiration and terror of the populace. In the summer, when tomatoes were ripe and cheap, playful mariners might sometimes use them as snowballs to pelt one another and the inhabitants withal; but such manifestations of high spirit were readily condoned in view of the vast amount of money spent by the visitors to the great profit of the natives. For a few days after the departure of the squadron one

could usually buy twenty-two or even twenty-three shillings for a gold sovereign, so great was the glut of English silver.

Of course there were always a certain number of drunks; indeed the wonder is there were not many more, considering the vile quality of the liquor sold to our unfortunate men for a shilling the bottle, just bad alcohol with a little colouring matter and labelled "Rum." I played an unwilling part in one such incident. One day, while seated in my office, a Turkish police officer burst in on me with a lack of ceremony which indicated a serious emergency. "Come, Consolos Bey, come quickly. The British soldiers are massacring the population." It was hardly any business of mine if they were, but like an idiot I left my legitimate occupations and accompanied him. He led me at the double to a shabby pub on the quay, whence arose the sound of British oaths and the shattering of glasses. A crowd was gathered round the entrance in pleased expectancy, but it scuttled hastily away as six or seven local civilians came tumbling out, behind them in pursuit one small marine, capless, beltless, and with the flush of alcohol and indignation on his face. The last of the fugitives was an elderly man and lame, who could not keep up with the others, and to him Her Majesty's Jolly shouted, "Don't run, you old fool. I'm a British marine, and I wouldn't hit an old man. But," as he caught sight of me, "here's a young 'un." And with that he doubled his fists, and advanced on me in an attitude of deadly menace.

Here was a pretty predicament. My left hand

had been accidentally injured lately, and was bound up. The way of retreat was barred by the spectators, who had reassembled at the delightful and unwonted prospect of a Consul in a tight place, while the policeman had prudently disappeared after leading me into it. An advantage of two or three inches in height over my prospective adversary was much more than counterbalanced by a game hand, and there seemed nothing before me but ignominious defeat, when another marine forced his way through the crowd, and seizing the warrior in his arms, carried him off kicking and protesting. But it was a near thing.

A couple of days afterwards I happened to be standing alone by the gangway of one of the ships of war when a smart-looking marine sidled up to me and whispered, "I am very grateful to you, sir, for not reporting that little incident on the quay. I was that boozed that I can remember nothing about it, but they tell me I behaved something horrid." It was my enemy, though I hardly recognised him.

We had not very much to do with the Turkish authorities, and I can recollect no instance of the Consulate coming into serious conflict with them. Centuries of contact with the foreign trading communities had allowed relations between the latter and the rulers of the country to become systematised. The British colony in particular were on very friendly terms with the Turks, knew exactly how to treat them, and as a rule settled any little difficulties which might arise in their own way and without official intervention. Sometimes valuable considera-

tion passed, and I knew of an Englishman interested in a mining enterprise who had to pay a bribe of £500 to secure the goodwill of the Vali on his behalf. It was all in the way of business, but what my friend did object to was the indelicate action of the Governor-General in opening the bag of gold in his presence and counting it coin by coin to ensure that the exact sum promised was actually paid. This was quite contrary to etiquette, which demands a certain air of dignified indifference, and usually the interposition of a third party as intermediary in such transactions. The Vali in question subsequently became Grand Vizier, and one can only hope that he brought to the service of the State the same careful attention which he devoted to his private affairs.

There is no denying that corruption existed to a great extent amongst the Turks, nor on the other hand, that the other inhabitants of the country, whether Greeks, Armenians, or Jews, were just as bad whenever they got the chance—but with this difference, that the Turk as a rule sticks to his bargain and performs his side of the contract, whereas the others often do not. Even foreigners, contaminated by the atmosphere of general laxness, were hardly so scrupulous as one likes to think they would have been in their own countries.

Foreign society in Smyrna was too large to form one family party as at Salonica. There were two large clubs in the town, a Greek and a European, which gave balls in the winter and acted more or less as centres; but the English residents kept a good deal to themselves, and formed a big enough

community to be self-sufficing. This was particularly the case with the settlement at Bournabat, which was besides too far from Smyrna for it to be an easy matter to attend any social functions which might be going on in the town. Besides, driving backwards and forwards at night when the trains did not run had always a spice of danger, and a short time after I left the place a party of English people thus returning from the theatre were waylaid on the road by brigands, and two of them carried off and held to ransom. The ransoms were paid and the captives released, but one of them died as the result of the hardships he had undergone.

After a day spent in the town one was quite content to enjoy the simple pleasures of the country. Bridge never failed, nor the more active amusements of tennis, football, shooting, and for a time, cricket. It is strange that cricket never really went down in Smyrna. I managed after considerable exertions to start a club, but it never had much life in it, and collapsed after a couple of seasons. The Smyrna-born English, with the exception of a few who had been to school at home, took the most languid interest in the game, and I suppose that if the truth were told our national pastime does lack attraction for those who have not been brought up to it. While the club lasted we played occasional matches against ships of war, beating single ships and suffering defeat at the hands of the united squadron; but in the absence of an appreciative gallery it was hard to maintain the enthusiasm of the players, and the club at no time looked like becoming a permanent institution.

On the other hand, football, the Rugby variety, was very popular. An annual match against Constantinople lent an abiding interest to the game, while the more spectacular nature of the encounter and its shorter duration always attracted a gratifying number of spectators. These were not only English, but natives of all sorts as well. None of the last-named understood the game, and the popular conception of the proceedings was well expressed by a Cavass whom I sent to fetch a carriage to take me to the ground on the occasion of a match, when he reported that not a vehicle was to be had, as "they have all gone to the fight."

The immediate vicinity of Bournabat provided little shooting beyond an occasional woodcock in the pomegranate groves round the village, but if one chose to go some little distance along the Aidin railway fairly good sport could be had in winter with cock and snipe. This entailed very early rising, for the train left the main line station about 5.30, and one had to drive for nearly an hour to get there. Some years, in an exceptionally cold winter, there would be enormous passages of cock, and big bags could be made, fifty couple to a single gun—that of a former British Consul—being the record. In my time there was nothing approaching this, and any one was considered to have had a satisfactory day who brought home five or six couple. I could rarely get away for a day's shooting during the week, so usually took my outing on a Sunday—unfortunately, the day also selected by crowds of sportsmen from Smyrna, mostly Greeks, who filled the train up with themselves, their dogs, and their

bottles of liquor, until my companions and I were glad to take refuge in the guard's van. I have seen over a hundred of these gentry leave by the train, and fifty of them alight at a single station, there to spread over the country, doing little execution, but effectually disturbing what game there might be, up to eleven or twelve o'clock, when they settled down to eating and drinking, principally drinking, until the train returned late in the afternoon. To avoid this crowd I generally frequented two nice little marshes near the stations of Kayass and Trianda, where it was possible to shoot ten couple or so of snipe in peace.

By going farther afield there was a good chance of pig and red-deer, but to go after them implied an expedition of several days, and led one into country which was far from safe.

The fear of brigands made any distant expedition an enterprise not to be lightly undertaken. Smyrna had always enjoyed an unenviable reputation for brigandage, sharing the honours in this respect with Salonica. The Turkish Government did its best to suppress the evil in its usual unsystematic and spasmodic way, but with no conspicuous success. The gendarmerie whose duty it was to deal with such malefactors were worse armed than the brigands, and the sympathies of the rural population, whose poverty rendered themselves immune, were hardly on the side of the authorities. Furthermore, the paternal habit of the Turks of detaining witnesses in safe custody so long as proceedings were pending did not encourage people to come forward to offer evidence. At times the scandal became so crying

that special measures had to be taken to cope with it. On one such crisis a Vali of Smyrna had the happy inspiration of enrolling a large band of uncatchable brigands in the ranks of the gendarmerie, on the principle of setting a thief to catch a thief. For a short time the plan worked admirably: the new gendarmes were up to all the tricks of the trade, and gave chase to their former confrères with zeal and success. But before long the inevitable relapse from grace occurred, the converts reverted to robbery, blackmail, and other improprieties, and the Vali had to acknowledge his experiment to be a dismal failure. Instead, however, of proscribing the backsliders and so driving them into open defiance of the Government, the wily functionary induced them by fair messages to pay him a visit in Smyrna, where, he said, he had the Sultan's instructions to distribute rewards to them; and when the band, suspecting nothing, marched into the courtyard of the Konak (Government house) they were at once shot down by a company of soldiers who awaited them. The photograph of their heads stuck on the spiked rails round the Konak was a souvenir much sought after by visitors to Smyrna when I was there.

At the beginning of my stay in Smyrna a case occurred in connection with brigandage which raised a nice point of ethics. An Englishman had been carried off a couple of years before and held to ransom, and one day I was requested by the police to send him round to identify, if possible, a bad character who had fallen into their hands, and was believed to be a member of the band. He informed

me afterwards that he recognised the fellow sure enough, but that he happened to be the one brigand who had behaved towards him with a certain degree of kindness, and had even intervened successfully on his behalf when the rest proposed to cut off his nose and send it into Smyrna as a hint that the ransom was being unduly delayed. Accordingly he refused to identify him. Was he right? The decision was a difficult one: gratitude for a nose saved in the one scale and public duty in the other.

As an illustration of the kind of ruffian who takes to brigandage, this same gentleman told me that in the course of his wanderings as a captive with the band one of his captors wore out his shoes. He accordingly sat himself down by a roadside and watched the passers-by until a man came up who was well shod, whereupon he shot the poor fellow down, appropriated his footwear, and rejoined his comrades as if he had performed the most natural act in the world.

Pleasant as was existence in Smyrna in the last decade of the nineteenth century, constant office work tended to become irksome after more than three years of it, and it was borne in on me that a change of scene and country would not be amiss. Accordingly, when the Vice-Consulate at Philippopolis in Bulgaria fell vacant in the spring of 1892, I applied for the post, and was gratified by the application being favourably entertained.

CHAPTER VI.

BULGARIA.

I SHALL always look back to Philippopolis with affection: very little routine work, excellent shooting, an interesting political situation, daily postal communication with England, a decent climate, and Constantinople available for an occasional holiday only a night's journey off. What more could a Vice-Consul wish for? Add to this a succession of amiable chiefs as Diplomatic Agents at Sofia, and there is small wonder that for six years my one preoccupation was lest some Ahab should set the eye of covetousness on my little vineyard and I be dispossessed. I remember that when I had led the serene life of a country gentleman there for some four years, an Assistant Under-Secretary for Foreign Affairs passed through Philippopolis, and I, being duly warned, went to do the great man homage at the railway station. He kindly asked me if there was anything I wanted, and when I replied that all I wished for was to be left alone until my turn came for promotion, he assured me with an oath that I was the only Consular Officer he had ever met who had a good word to say for his post.

Philippopolis in 1892 was almost as large a town

as Sofia. The number of inhabitants was about 36,000, only 4000 or 5000 less than the capital, which is now treble the size, and a certain prestige still hung round the place as having been only a few years before the seat of Government of the Autonomous Province of Eastern Roumelia; but its importance was already on the wane, and at the present day it has sunk to the level of a mere provincial town.

It was a picturesque place enough, built on the bank of the River Maritsa and round three hills, which suggested to the Romans the name they gave it of Trimontium. From the architectural point of view it contained nothing striking, nor had the Bulgarians in their fourteen years of emancipation done much to beautify the town. Philippopolis may have been a little cleaner than it was under the Turks, but not much. The streets when paved at all were paved with cobble-stones, but pavement was the exception rather than the rule. Except in dry weather galoshes had to be worn if one was paying a call or going to a party and wanted to show clean shoes, but circumstances were sometimes too strong even for galoshes. I remember that the Turkish representative returning to his house after an evening's outing got stuck in the mud while crossing a road, and only extricated himself with the loss of a galosh. Next morning he sent his servant to retrieve it, and the man brought him no less than five derelict galoshes to choose from, all of which had been abandoned by their owners in the same delectable spot.

The climate, on the whole, was good, though

intensely cold in winter, when fierce winds swept down across the plain from the Balkans and deep snow covered the country round. Hailstorms were a curse, and did enormous damage, so much so that insurance against hail was made compulsory by law. Rice was cultivated to a large extent round the town, mostly by the Turks, and the rice-fields bred mosquitoes to propagate malaria, which was very rife. Otherwise there was not much to complain of on the score of health.

The Consular body consisted of a Greek Consul-General, French and Austrian Consuls, and Italian and British Vice-Consuls. Russia was unrepresented for the first four years of my stay, after which a Russian Vice-Consul made his appearance. Meanwhile the Frenchman was in charge of Russian interests. Turkey, as the Suzerain Power, did not deign to appoint a Consul, but was represented by a Commissioner, Colonel Fetih Bey, a very civilised and pleasant little man, who lost his life in one of the battles of the Balkan War of 1912. Europeanised in other respects, he showed himself a great stickler for the sanctity of the harem; and though his wife exchanged visits with the Consuls' wives, the Consuls themselves never saw her, with one exception. He was calling one day with her on the French Consul's wife, when the Frenchman, who was out and knew nothing of the visit, returned home unexpectedly and entered the drawing-room. The situation was unprecedented and alarming; but Fetih Bey rose to the occasion, and politely but firmly led the intruder out of his own house and into the street, closing the door behind him.

Eastern Roumelia possessed few attractions for strangers, and the foreign community was very small—a few Frenchmen, some Austrians connected with the Oriental Railway, one or two Greek subjects, and such like. The British colony at its maximum numbered eight—viz., two clerks in the Ottoman Bank, one of them married with a wife and child; the sister of an Englishman married to a Bulgarian; a German who had been naturalised in England; and a British Levantine employed in the Austrian Consulate, who before long assumed Austrian nationality,—rather a mixed lot. All were good citizens and gave me no trouble, and I sometimes wondered what I was there for. The Turkish Capitulations were still in force, but the British Consular Court never sat during my time.

The comparative absence of foreigners did not imply a homogeneous Bulgarian population. The ruling element was certainly in the majority, but there was a strong minority of Turks, and to a less extent of Ottoman Greeks. The Turks, sullenly submissive to the change of régime, though they grumbled a bit, had nothing substantial to complain of since the inevitable friction of the days immediately following the war which did away with their domination. The Greeks bore much ill-will to the Bulgars, and found it hard to forget the time when they monopolised all posts not filled by Turks, to the entire exclusion of the Bulgars, for whom little was left but the cultivation of the land, and when there was no separate Bulgarian Church and the Greek Patriarch's jurisdiction extended from Constantinople to the Danube. They



A BULGARIAN COUNTRY TOWN.

did not mix socially with the Bulgars, but cherished a sulky aloofness, which was slightly ridiculous.

One led a very quiet life in Philippopolis. The Bulgarians themselves did nothing in the social way, with the one brilliant exception of the Officers' Club, which each winter gave a series of hops and invited the élite of the town. These were modest entertainments, and the guests paid for their own refreshments—a very sensible arrangement, as the officers, who lived on their pay, would otherwise not have been able to afford the expense of giving parties at all. But they were quite enjoyable in spite of the atmosphere of almost exaggerated decorum which one often finds amongst people who are not quite sure of themselves. Nine hundred and ninety-nine Bulgarians out of a thousand had been simple peasants fourteen or fifteen years before, and wealth was still so evenly distributed that very few people were more than just comfortably off. I do not suppose that the one rich man of Philippopolis, whose wealth was spoken of with bated breath, had more than £2000 or £3000 a year. A Cabinet Minister's salary was only £500. The officers formed the aristocracy, and to marry an officer was the ambition of every Bulgarian flapper. The triumph over the Serbs in 1885 had given great prestige to the Army, and the military caste, not without reason, thought a good deal of themselves. The Bulgarian officer was always smartly dressed in a uniform copied from the Russian, took a deep interest in his profession, and was saturated with *esprit de corps*. A tendency to interfere in politics was his particular weakness.

I think it was mostly the shooting, which I had sampled one autumn during a short holiday from Smyrna, that first attracted my attention to Philippopolis as a desirable place of residence. Without being anything out of the way, it was far from bad, and one could enjoy it without being put to great expense. In August and September, quail, both home-bred birds and migrants, were to be found in fair quantities within twenty minutes' walk of the town, and one could reckon on picking up ten brace or so of these succulent little birds in a couple of hours' walk through the fields. Partridge-shooting generally meant a carriage drive, though I have at times come on a covey close to the town. In some parts of the province they were quite abundant, considering that no attempt was made to preserve them or other game, and I once shot fifteen brace in a day near Jamboli. Snipe came as soon as the quail had left, in no very great quantities, but generally sufficient to justify the four miles' tramp to the marsh; then duck and woodcock till winter set in and the whole countryside was under snow.

In the early spring the neighbourhood of Philippopolis was visited by the double or solitary snipe—fine fat birds about half as large again as the ordinary snipe—on their way back to breed in northern regions. Curiously enough, these birds took a different route when migrating southwards at the end of autumn, and we never saw them, while the ordinary snipe did exactly the opposite. The double snipe are quite unusual in their habits, hiding in long herbage on the edge of a marsh and sticking so

tightly to their positions that it is hard to induce them to rise without the aid of a dog. They were in no great numbers, and four or five couple formed a bag with which I was very well satisfied, particularly as they came at a time when there was nothing else to shoot.

To explain the political situation as I found it in 1892 it is necessary to go back some years. The close of the Russo-Turkish War of 1877-78 saw Turkey on her knees and impotent to reject any terms which Russia might choose to impose, nor was the latter Power in a merciful mood. Amongst other hard conditions contained in the Treaty of San Stefano, Turkey was forced to agree to the creation out of her former European territory of a great Bulgarian State extending from the Danube to the Ægean, which Russia no doubt intended to be a mere outpost for herself and a stepping-stone to Constantinople when a favourable opportunity should occur. At all events the Government of Lord Beaconsfield credited her with this design, and determined to thwart it. The Conference of Berlin was called to consider the situation; the Treaty of San Stefano was torn up; and not only was Bulgaria reduced to half the dimensions originally proposed, with no outlet to the Ægean, but they divided what was left into two parts. Between the Danube and the Balkans was the Bulgaria proper, with a prince to be elected by the population and confirmed by the Porte with the approval of the signatory Powers; south of the Balkans the wiseacres of Berlin created Eastern Roumelia, with a militia and an elected chamber of its own, but still a province of the Turkish

Empire, to be governed by a Vali appointed by the Porte for five years, with the approbation of the Powers.

It was hardly to be supposed that two little States of the same race living next door to one another and desiring to unite could be kept permanently apart; the wonder rather is that this unnatural state of affairs should have lasted six whole years. In 1885 a rising took place at Philippopolis, the Turkish Vali was driven out, and union with Bulgaria proclaimed. The Russians, who ever since the Treaty of Berlin had promised the Bulgarians and Eastern Roumeliots that their separation should be only temporary and that the Tsar would soon put an end to it, now took umbrage because the latter had ventured to act on their own initiative without waiting for the word to come from Petersburg, and did their best to induce the Sultan to march Turkish troops into the province and restore the *status quo*. Great Britain executed as complete a volte-face in the contrary direction, and, perceiving the union to be distasteful to Russia, hung on tightly to the skirts of the Sultan to prevent him upsetting it. In the end the problem was solved by the ingenious device of the Suzerain Power appointing the Prince of Bulgaria as Vali of Eastern Roumelia.

Meanwhile Prince Alexander of Battenberg, who had ascended the throne of Bulgaria as Russian nominee but had fallen out with his domineering patrons, found himself on the horns of a dilemma. If he refused to countenance what the Roumeliots had done he alienated his own subjects; on the

other hand, to put himself at the head of the movement implied a complete breach with Russia. He chose the latter alternative, and thereby lost his throne, but had first the satisfaction of administering a sound beating to the Serbs, who considered the union of the two Bulgarian provinces as a disturbance of the balance of power in the Balkans sufficient to justify an attempt on their part to obtain compensation by an onslaught on Bulgaria. He did not long survive his victory, being kidnapped by malcontent officers of his army acting in the Russian interest, and hustled out of the country.

Brought back by the loyalists, headed by Stepan Stambuloff, the President of the Bulgarian Assembly, Prince Alexander found his position untenable in face of the implacable hostility of Russia, and with treason rife in his own army. He therefore abdicated and quitted the country voluntarily, leaving the Government in the hands of a Regency of three persons, of whom Stambuloff was the leading spirit.

For a year the Regency carried on the administration in spite of Russian interference and intimidation, but they experienced the greatest difficulty in finding a candidate for the vacant throne. By the Treaty of Berlin the approval of all the signatory Powers was essential for the recognition of a prince, and the Tsar let it be known that no one would have his approval until the Bulgarians climbed down and ate humble pie, which, with Stambuloff at the head of affairs, they were not in the least inclined to do.

At last a candidate with sufficient ambition and courage to brave the Muscovite veto came forward in the person of Prince Ferdinand of Coburg, who

was duly elected by the Assembly, and reached the country in August 1887. The Regency died a natural death, and Stambuloff became Prime Minister, an office which he was to hold for seven years.

At first Prince Ferdinand, who had enjoyed no greater opportunities of acquiring administrative experience than any other subaltern in an Austrian regiment, was content to leave everything in Stambuloff's capable hands. The latter carried on his broad shoulders the whole responsibility of Government, dealt effectively if brutally with a series of plots and risings, conciliated the Suzerain Power, and defied the Muscovites, until at the time I took up my post all internal opposition had been crushed and the Russian attitude was one of sulky estrangement, while they maintained their veto on Prince Ferdinand's election.

Relations, however, between the prince and his dictatorial Minister were becoming strained. The two men were personally uncongenial to one another. The dour peasant despised the rather decadent princeling, while the latter resented Stambuloff's uncouth manners and unceremonious address, and chafed at being kept in leading-strings long after he had, in his own opinion, reached a stage when he might quite well govern for himself.

I only met Stambuloff once, when he came from Sofia to Philippopolis to attend the opening of an exhibition there in the autumn of 1892. He struck me as an eminently strong man, full of self-confidence and vigour, but one I should not like to have as an enemy.

Prince Ferdinand's visits to Philippopolis were

more frequent. He came down twice or thrice a year and put up in a large bungalow dignified with the name of "Palace," and sometimes stayed for a couple of weeks or so. In the early years his mother, Princess Clementine, a daughter of Louis Philippe, King of France, accompanied him, a clever if unscrupulous old lady, who was believed to have been behind her son's bid for a throne and to have financed the venture. She was as deaf as a post, and everything one said had to be screamed into her ear by a lady-in-waiting with an ear-trumpet. It was a little embarrassing to hear one's very banal remarks thus repeated, and audiences of the old princess were something of an ordeal.

Judgment has been passed on Prince Ferdinand, and he will go down to posterity as "the old fox of the Balkans." And yet the sagacity of the fox is a most useful quality for the ruler of any Balkan State, where a rabbit would have little chance. Unscrupulous he certainly was, but what earthly hope would there be for a man of scruples in a country like Bulgaria, and with Greeks, Turks, Serbs, and Roumanians for next-door neighbours? If he fought for his own hand, when not a soul in Europe would lift a finger to help him, who can blame him? No; Bulgaria might have gone further and fared worse in her search for a ruler, and had Ferdinand's reign closed at any time between 1908 and 1913 the country would have had cause to feel grateful to a sovereign who with all his faults had led it to complete independence and to a position of at least equality with surrounding small States.

When I first made his acquaintance, Prince

Ferdinand's position was one extremely galling to the vanity which was so marked a trait in his character. No Powers recognised him officially as Prince of Bulgaria; and though in the course of time he had come to be treated by the majority as the *de facto* ruler, he was denied the outward signs of respect to a crowned head for which his soul yearned. When he travelled abroad, as he was fond of doing, he only received such honours as were due to a Coburg prince, and he was wont to refer to himself bitterly as "the Pariah of Europe." Russia simply boycotted both Bulgaria and its prince, and had long ago withdrawn her diplomatic and Consular representatives from the country. France was then the obedient humble servant of Russia. Austria at heart may have been favourable to his cause, but outwardly maintained a strict reserve. Germany considered the affair as none of hers, and certainly not worth offending Russia over. Great Britain and Italy treated him with a certain degree of platonic benevolence, which, however, never approached active support, and if he had waited for outside help he might have grown old as an unrecognised prince.

In private life Ferdinand was a witty fellow, prompt to perceive the humorous side of every one and everything but himself. Of a quick temper, which became worse as he grew older, he must have been a trying master to serve under, and there is a story of his pursuing an offending private secretary up and down the corridors of the Sofia palace until the fugitive took refuge in the lavatory and locked himself in, when the prince was seen on his knees

outside, and hissing through the keyhole, "Sors donc, coquin, que je te tue!"

The occasional presence of the court did not have much effect on social life in Philippopolis. The palace was so small as to leave no space for entertaining. I once dined there, and had various audiences of the prince and his mother, and later on, when he was married, of the princess his wife. The Italian Vice-Consul and I had an *entente,* and we used to see him off at the railway station when he left the town—an attention for which he always expressed himself as grateful and much surprised. He may have been grateful, but I doubt the surprise, as we were always warned beforehand from the palace of the hour at which his train would start.

Not much love was lost between prince and people. Ferdinand looked down on his subjects as boors, and liked to sharpen his wits upon them. The Bulgarians, who objected to foreigners on principle, regarded a foreign ruler as a necessary evil, resented his disposition to laugh at them, and grudged him his civil list, though he probably spent more in the country than he drew from it.

The Bulgarian peasant was a queer mortal. He had many good qualities, was industrious to a degree, thrifty, moral, patriotic, tenacious of his rights, and not unsober considering the cheapness of intoxicating liquor. On the other hand, his thrift often degenerated into miserliness; though slow to anger his temper when roused was diabolical, and, like the buffalo, the beloved partner of his labours, he was subject to gusts of ferocity which turned him into a fiend.

A pastime to which the peasantry, in common with all classes of the population, were addicted was dancing the "Horo." This sombre performance consists in the dancers catching hold of each other's waistbands, man and maid alternately, and sidling over the ground in a long string to the strains of any music which may be available. There were no particular steps which I could distinguish, and it was rare that a dancer was sufficiently inspired by high spirits or alcohol to indulge in any movement which attained to the liveliness of a caper. Solemn and dreary as the "Horo" appeared to any one not bred in the country, the Bulgars had hardly any other form of popular amusement, and were never so happy as when indulging in it. The "Horo" was trotted out on every possible occasion. It was the *pièce de résistance* on all public feast-days, the outward and visible sign of popular rejoicing, and when it was desired to give an ovation to any favoured personage the crowd could offer no greater testimony of regard than to link up and dance the "Horo" before his house. In this truly democratic country ploughboys and Cabinet Ministers might be seen footing it together in the national dance.

A Bulgarian defect which particularly struck the foreigner was the general uncleanliness of the people. The lower classes made no attempt to disrobe at night, and I doubt if they ever changed their socks until these rotted off them. To stand to leeward of a Bulgarian battalion exercising is an experience I would not wish to repeat. In a book on Bulgaria, written by an Englishman who settled there after the Crimean War and remained many years, I saw



BULGARIANS DANCING THE "HORO"

a statement that the Bulgarian woman took but one bath during her lifetime, on the eve of her wedding, when she washed all over. The bridesmaid stood by in a state of nature to keep her in countenance, but did not share in the ablutions. I can testify from experience as an eyewitness that this rule was not universal.

I was once driving from Philippopolis to Kezanlik, and came to a spot where a few yards from the road a number of hot springs issued from the earth and formed a kind of warm swamp. Here on that particular day the ladies from a neighbouring village were washing their family linen. The men-folk had driven them up and remained smoking and gossiping in their buffalo-carts. As soon as a woman had finished her laundry, she stripped and washed her own underthings and then immersed her person, remaining meanwhile in a state of nudity with complete disregard for the men, who were probably accustomed to the scene, and for any wayfarers who, in the case of one at least, certainly were not.

In the spring of 1893 Prince Ferdinand married Princess Marie Louise of Parma, who in January of the next year presented him with a son and heir, Boris, the present King of Bulgaria. The Duke, her father, insisted, as one of the essential conditions of the marriage, that the issue thereof must be brought up as Roman Catholics. On the other hand, the Bulgarian Constitution laid down that the heir to the throne should belong to the Orthodox Church, and before the ceremony could be solemnised a Grand Sobranie had to be summoned to modify the Constitution in this respect.

The change, which Stambuloff forced through on the prince's behalf, undoubtedly gave a shock to Bulgarian sentiment, and impaired the Prime Minister's popularity, thus facilitating the prince's next enterprise, which was to get rid of him.

Having married a wife and founded a dynasty, Prince Ferdinand's thoughts turned naturally enough to regularising his own very equivocal position. This end could not be attained unless Russia was conciliated, and as Stambuloff had offended the Tsar beyond hope of pardon, Stambuloff had to go. Relations, too, between prince and Premier had of late become more strained than ever: Stambuloff slighted and brow-beat the prince, while the prince in return harried him in underhand ways and intrigued with the opposition, but hesitated to take the extreme step of dismissal. At last, in May 1904, Stambuloff was goaded into resigning.

The country in general appeared not averse to a change, and took the situation calmly. In the provinces only the more ardent supporters of the fallen statesman raised their voices in protest, and despatched telegrams to the palace demanding that the resignation should not be accepted. At Philippopolis they called a public meeting, which proved a sad fiasco. I looked in to see what was going on, and found not more than a couple of hundred persons in the hall. An orator was reading out the telegram which was to be sent to the prince. He began: "Ten thousand citizens of Philippopolis," when a tipsy Stambulofist in the audience hiccupped out, "Poveche, poveche" (more, more). "Thank you," said the orator, and continued, "Fifteen thousand

citizens of Philippopolis in public meeting assembled wish to protest," &c., &c. In the capital a crowd of Stambulofists going to the palace to present a similar resolution which they had voted were attacked by the opposition mob, a riot ensued, and the military had to take charge of the town until the new Government was appointed. Stoiloff, a lawyer who had formerly served as Minister under Stambuloff, became Premier, supported by a Coalition Cabinet drawn from the various elements of the opposition. The administrative officials appointed by Stambuloff throughout the country were at once dismissed wholesale as a necessary prelude to elections for a fresh Assembly.

In resigning his office, Stambuloff had no idea that his career was at an end, but quite anticipated that after a due interval his services would again be needed. And so it might possibly have been but for his own fatal mistake. Irritated beyond endurance by a system of petty persecutions which the new Government at once inaugurated against him, and by the attacks of the Sofia rabble they turned loose to mob him, spit upon him, and stone him in the streets, and holding the prince responsible, who stood aloof and did nothing for his protection, he gave an interview to a German journalist in which, with all the venom at his command, he held Prince Ferdinand up to public ridicule. Published originally in the 'Frankfurter Zeitung,' and copied by the whole European press, this interview touched the prince in his tenderest spot—his vanity, and ever afterwards he was animated by a spirit of rancorous hostility to his former counsellor.

The result of the elections held in the autumn was a foregone conclusion. The Government always won in Bulgaria. I only witnessed one election at Philippopolis under Stambuloff's régime, and then I do not think there was any opposition. It would not have been any use if there had, for round the voting-place were seated two deep a band of "Sopajis"—club men—prepared to break the heads of any who disagreed with the policy of the Government, and the police stood ready to back up the Sopajis in case of need. The clubs with which these gentry were armed were known affectionately as "the Constitution." At the elections of 1894, Stoiloff and his allies used the time-honoured methods. In Eastern Roumelia all went off quietly, but in Bulgaria proper Stambuloff's adherents showed more spirit, and some riots occurred, but without affecting the result, which was overwhelmingly in favour of the Government fractions, and so far as I remember not a single Stambulofist was returned.

The new Sobranie continued *con amore* the task of baiting Stambuloff. A Commission was chosen to investigate the actions of his Ministry, another to inquire into charges of dishonesty brought against him, and his property was placed under sequester. A special law was hurriedly passed "for the prosecution of Government officials who appeared to have more money than they ought," aimed particularly at Stambuloff and his friend Petkoff, the ex-President of the Sobranie; but it quite failed in its purpose, for no malpractices could be proved, and as a matter of fact neither of them were rich men. Ridiculous criminal charges were trumped up against him, and

his house was invaded by the police; in fact his enemies made use of every device that ingenious hatred could conceive.

Stambuloff was the last man in the world to lie down to attacks of this sort, but he had no other weapon of offence or defence than his newspaper, the 'Svoboda,' and in its columns day by day he published articles of amazing violence against both prince and Government. What he wrote of Stoiloff, Natchevitch, and the rest of his political and private enemies in the 'Svoboda' was pretty well matched by what they wrote of him in their organ, the 'Mir'; but no amount of provocation could excuse the indecent scurrility of his onslaughts against Prince Ferdinand, and they were only explicable on the supposition that the man was half mad with rage and indignation.

With the new year his position became truly tragical. The official persecution continued unabated. His health began to suffer, and he was a prey to well-founded apprehensions on account of the presence in Sofia of three deadly enemies sworn to have his life. These men, Macedonians, had been implicated several years ago in the political murders of Belcheff, Minister of Finance, who was assassinated in Sofia in mistake for Stambuloff himself, and of Dr Vulcovitch, Bulgarian Diplomatic Agent at Constantinople. One of them, Naoum Tufekjieff, bore Stambuloff a special grudge on account of the death of a brother, who, thrown into prison for the first-named crime, was believed not without grounds to have suffered torture in order to extort a confession, and to have succumbed to its effects. So far from

the Government affording Stambuloff any protection against the designs of the assassins, at least one member of the Cabinet, Natchevitch, Minister for Foreign Affairs, was in constant and friendly communication with Tufekjieff.

At length Stambuloff, knowing, as every one in Sofia knew, what awaited him, and being by this time seriously ill, begged for permission to leave the country to undergo a cure in Europe, but he was refused a passport on the pretext that his conduct was still under investigation by the Commissions appointed by the Sobranie. Those who were interested in getting rid of him were too numerous and too influential to allow him any chance of escape.

As the destined time approached, Prince Ferdinand discreetly went abroad in order to secure an alibi. On July 14 the Government organ, the 'Mir,' called on its friends to "tear the flesh from the bones of Stambuloff and Petkoff"; and on the evening of the 15th, as the two friends were driving home from the Union Club, at the very spot where Stambuloff had often prophesied that he would meet his fate, the three murderers sprang upon them. Stambuloff and Petkoff jumped out and fell in the road. Petkoff, a one-armed man, half stunned and *hors de combat* for the moment, could do nothing to help his friend, while the driver, probably in the plot, whipped up his horses and carried on Stambuloff's devoted servant and guard, Guntcho, who was on the box. The assassins hacked at Stambuloff's head with their yataghans as he lay prostrate, until Guntcho at length came up and fired at them with his revolver. Then they fled, and an officer with

three gendarmes, who were hovering near, arrested Guntcho.

When the assassins had got safely away Stambuloff was removed to his house. His hands, with which he had vainly tried to save his head, were cut in pieces, and both had to be amputated, and his face and head bore fifteen wounds, but he lingered for two days before expiring. The vindictiveness of his enemies pursued him even to his grave-side, and scandalous scenes accompanied the interment.

Assassination has ever been a habit—one might almost say a hobby—amongst the politicians of South-Eastern Europe, but, with the possible exception of the murder of the King and Queen of Serbia by Serbian officers eight years later, that of Stambuloff eclipsed all others for the extreme savagery of the accompanying circumstances. Such as it was, it certainly cleared the air for the reconciliation with Russia so much desired by prince, Government, and the majority of the people.

The Russians on their side, now that Tsar Alexander III. too had fallen by the hand of an assassin and his successor Nicholas was less influenced by feelings of personal pique, were not averse to letting bygones be bygones; but to save their face Prince Ferdinand must first perform some signal act of atonement, and it was intimated that only if he rebaptised his son in the Orthodox Church could he obtain forgiveness. The situation was an awkward one for him. Apart from the immediate advantage of securing his own recognition, it was obviously in the interest of the dynasty and the country that the future prince should belong to the National

Church. But then he, Prince Ferdinand, had given his word of honour to the Pope and to his father-in-law that the issue of his marriage with Princess Marie Louise should be brought up as Roman Catholics, and the Pope emphatically declined to let him off. However, the struggle between conscience and material interest was not a long one. I can imagine how Ferdinand at length shrugged his shoulders and sardonically adapted his great ancestor's epigram to his own circumstances, "Sofia vaut bien une messe"; and in 1906 the Orthodox Church gained an unconscious proselyte.

The reconciliation was complete. The Tsar stood sponsor at the baptism, a Russian Diplomatic Agent was at once appointed to Sofia, and Russian Consuls trooped back to their posts. On his side Ferdinand bore lightly the minor excommunication with which the Pope requited his breach of faith, and kowtowed to the Russians with manifest satisfaction. In his anxiety to do honour to his new friends, he perhaps went farther than was pretty in cold-shouldering the old, and in one instance at least he behaved with conspicuous rudeness to the British Diplomatic Agent.

In the winter of the year which witnessed the "Conversion" of the infant Boris I was summoned to Constantinople to take charge of the Consulate there for several months, but the account of my sojourn there is best reserved for separate mention.

I have stated that all Stambuloff's adherents were at once ejected by the new Government from the administrative posts they occupied—a measure, serving the double purpose of consolidating a Govern-

ment's own position and of providing rewards for its friends, which is popular in all the Balkan countries. Amongst numerous other changes, we received at Philippopolis a new Chief of Police, whose end happened in rather an unusual manner. He had previously been employed in some subordinate capacity at Sofia, and was understood to have rendered services of a confidential nature to the prince which led to his promotion. Of an exceptionally mild disposition, as he told me himself, he felt quite out of sympathy with the crude police methods of the Stambuloff régime. What, he asked, was the use of beating a prisoner with a stick until he confessed when an avowal could be obtained by gentle means? His own method, he said, was to feed a culprit exclusively on salt fish for twenty-four hours or more and give him nothing whatever to drink meanwhile. He then had a jug of water and a tumbler placed prominently on the table in his office, and sent for the prisoner. It was rare, he assured me, for such a one to refuse to make a clean breast of it as the price of a drink.

It is sad that such a humanitarian should come to grief in the way he did, and less through his own fault than that of another, a captain in the army who held the position of aide-de-camp to the princess. This officer had a liaison with a *café-chantant* girl at Sofia, and in due course became tired of her. He also had the opportunity of making an advantageous match with the daughter of a wealthy Pope (priest), and as the girl threatened trouble he felt compelled to get rid of her. The job was an awkward one to carry through single-handed, and

of all the persons in the world the captain applied for assistance to our excellent Chief of Police, telling him that it was the Prince's order that the girl should be made away with. The chief demurred at first, and appears to have had some slight misgivings, but being assured again that it was the positive order of His Royal Highness, he at length agreed to do his best.

So the captain enticed the wretched girl down to Philippopolis, the Chief of Police hired a carriage with a complacent driver, and the pair took her out for a drive one night till they came to a deep stream flowing into the Maritsa. There the carriage was stopped, the two throttled their victim, and threw the body into the water with a stone to sink it. The captain then returned to Sofia to marry his rich bride, and the Chief of Police resumed his duties as guardian of law and order.

This might have been the end of the incident but for the fact that the girl was an Austrian subject, and that when she disappeared from Sofia her authorities caused inquiries to be made. She was traced to Philippopolis, where the Austrian Consul, in spite of discouragement from the local police, whose Head could not be expected to show much zeal in the matter, hung on to the trail until he ascertained that she had not left the town, and had last been seen in company with her lover. Finally, floods came, and the corpse was washed into the Maritsa and carried down-stream, until it brought up at a village whose mayor happened to be a Stambulofist. Had his political sentiments been of a different complexion, he would probably

have assisted the *corpus delicti* on its voyage across the frontier into Turkey in order to avoid complications; as it was, he scented trouble for the Government, and had it brought on shore.

There was now no means of avoiding a scandal. According to the story current at the time, Prince Ferdinand sent for his wife's aide-de-camp and acquainted him with the evidence against him, which by this time was pretty conclusive. He then ostentatiously placed a revolver on the table and himself left the room, telling the culprit that there was only one course open to him. The hint was not taken. Arrest followed, and the pair were tried for the murder at Philippopolis, convicted, and hanged by the neck till they were dead.

Stambuloff's police system may have been brutal, but it was certainly efficient. He entirely stamped out brigandage, and a traveller could roam anywhere without fear of molestation, except perhaps at times in the mountains bordering on the Macedonian frontier. I took full advantage of this state of things, so different from Smyrna, where there was no security at any distance from the town, and I visited most of the towns and districts of Eastern Roumelia, either to find fresh shooting-ground or out of simple curiosity.

The show place in this part of the world is the district round Kezanlik, between the Balkan Mountains and a lesser range of hills to the south, which is known as the valley of roses, a truly beautiful tract of country. Here the *rosa damascena*, originally introduced from Persia, is cultivated on an enormous scale for the manufacture of attar, and when I

passed through while distillation was in progress, the whole countryside reeked with the sickly odour of rotting rose-leaves. The attar is far too strong to be used by itself, but serves as the basis for most perfumes. One used to be able to procure in the bazaars at Constantinople little gilded phials containing a drop or two of the stuff, and this, though much adulterated and tightly corked, was sufficient to scent a whole chest of drawers.

The hotels, or rather inns—for even in the larger country towns there was no house of entertainment deserving the more pretentious designation,—offered but a poor welcome to the traveller. All were infested by bugs, whose numbers and voracity gave them an unfair advantage. Once in desperation I emptied a whole tin of insect-powder into my bed, and in the morning collected no less than seventeen corpses as the result. The bed-linen was hardly ever changed; one could scarcely expect it, considering that the sheet was usually stitched carefully to the "yorgan" or cotton quilt, which in Bulgaria, as in Turkey, took the place of woollen blankets. The sanitary arrangements were too awful to think of.

In the bedrooms a printed set of rules was displayed for the guidance of visitors, but they were more honoured in the breach than in the observance. Two of them come back to me as I write: "Guests are forbidden to go to bed in their boots," and "Guests should refrain from spitting on the walls."

One custom of inn life was rather embarrassing for the bashful traveller. When you engaged a bed you literally got a bed, and if, as was usually the case, there were two or three more in a room, other

visitors had a perfect right to occupy them. If you wanted a room to yourself you had to pay for all the beds in it. Once, before I was up to this custom, I had retired to rest in an inn room where there were three beds. A little later a Bulgarian officer and his wife were ushered in, and immediately began, with the utmost nonchalance, to make their preparations for the night, and I had to buy them out.

All this was thirty years ago, and I have no doubt that Bulgaria has since advanced as much in respect of provision for the comfort of travellers as it has in most other ways.

Certainly the most enjoyable excursion I ever made was a driving tour in Eastern Roumelia and Bulgaria in company with Sir Francis Elliot, the British Diplomatic Agent at Sofia. We started from Philippopolis towards the end of August in one of the ordinary carriages of the town, a kind of victoria, drawn by three horses instead of the usual two. The owner and driver was a Greek, the cheeriest and most obliging of his class, and as he was paid by the day, we were free to go where and as far as we chose. There is no better way to see a country than driving through it, provided that the weather is propitious. I do not think that a drop of rain fell the whole time we were away, and an enormous blue umbrella, which Sir Francis possessed, provided ample shade when the sun was too hot.

Our route led us through Kezanlik and across the Balkans by the Shipka Pass, the scene of some of the hardest fighting in the Russo-Turkish War, now almost forgotten except by the student of military

history. The ascent was very steep, too much so for the horses, which were taken out of the shafts and replaced by oxen, while the driver and ourselves rode the horses up the pass. The road passed Fort St Nicholas, which Russian troops held against the frantic assaults of Suleiman Pasha's army, and where the ground was still littered with fragments of shell and the bones of gallant Turks who had fallen twenty years before. The northern slope of the Balkans is much more gradual than the southern, and we drove with great comfort through the picturesque little town of Gabrovo and on to Tirnovo, the ancient capital of Bulgaria. There we turned back and took a westerly route home through Sevlievo and over the Troyan Pass.

On the northern side of the pass, about a couple of thousand feet from the summit, lies the Troyan monastery, a biggish place, which could hold a hundred monks or more, but now there were only a dozen of them with two abbots, or rather an abbot and his superannuated predecessor. We stopped there for three very pleasant days, and were warmly welcomed by the hospitable inmates. The monastery served to some extent as a summer resort. Visitors were taken in gratis for three days, after which they were expected to pay for their entertainment. Our stay was limited to three days because we had to be getting on, and not with any intention of profiting by this rule of the monastery. Had we been inspired by any such base idea we should have suffered disappointment, for on the last evening a book was brought in with many bows and smiles, in which distinguished visitors were

encouraged to enter their names and any contributions they might feel inclined to make to the monastery funds.

The monks proved a most jovial lot, and entertained us handsomely. Before dinner the first night the young abbot informed us jocularly that his predecessor was their champion drinker, and would be pleased to take the visitors on. Sir Francis discreetly excused himself, but I should not like to say how many glasses of plum brandy I swallowed before being obliged to cry "Hold, enough!" to the unconquerable veteran. This liquor, as distilled by the monks on the premises, was quite the purest and most agreeable spirit I ever tasted, and produced no unpleasant after-effects.

The abbots showed us round their establishment with great pride. There was nothing architecturally striking about the building, but the frescoes outside the chapel, which depicted the various kinds of punishment awaiting evildoers hereafter, were of the most harrowing description, and well calculated to keep any one who saw them in the straight path. I particularly pitied the fate of one unhappy lady who was represented in the act of being swallowed by some marine monster, with her boots and a few inches of her frock projecting from his mouth.

In a kind of catacomb we were shown the skulls of dead and gone abbots for many generations back, all beautifully cleaned and polished. The young abbot handled them nonchalantly, but I noticed a pensive expression on the face of his senior, who was evidently thinking of the time, surely not far

distant, when in the course of nature his own cranium would be added to the collection.

The monastery in mediæval fashion possessed a stew full of various kinds of fish, and when we saw trout scooped out for our dinner, we said we should like to go fishing in the river, which ran close to the establishment. "Certainly," replied the abbot. "There are abundance of trout in our river. What do you fish with—nets or dynamite?"

We replied modestly that we had brought rods, lines, and flies, and would prefer these to the more up-to-date methods he suggested. He assured us that we should not catch fish like that in his river, but we persisted, and, sure enough, not a rise rewarded our two hours' flogging of the water.

When our ill-success was reported to the abbot, he naturally said, "I told you so," and invited us to take a lesson from him. Armed with a casting-net, and we following meekly, he proceeded to a pool and cast his net with practised hand. As he drew it in, he said, "Now you will see some trout," but the net proved as empty as our creels. He went on to another pool, and yet another and another, with the same distressing result, and returned to his monastery a very disappointed ecclesiastic.

As the Troyan Pass was bad for carriages, we sent ours back by the Shipka to meet us at Karlovo, and ourselves started early in the morning to meet it there by the Troyan Pass. The kindly monks lent us ponies to take us up to the top, and we walked the rest of the way. It must have been nearer thirty miles than twenty, but we were buoyed up by circumstantial accounts of a marvellous pub.



THE TROYAN MONASTERY.

THE MONKS OF TROYAN.

by the wayside, always a few miles farther on, where beer of surpassing coolness was to be had. When at last we reached the hostelry it proved to be shut up, but it had served its purpose, and we finally struggled into Karlovo; and so home.

In the autumn of 1898 my long stay in Eastern Roumelia was brought to a close by an intimation that I had been appointed British Consul at Basra. Promotion was promotion, and I had been ten years a Vice-Consul, but, on the other hand, I knew nothing about Basra except that it was terribly far off, and that it bore the reputation of being the most unhealthy town in the Turkish Empire. So it was with mixed feelings that I said good-bye to Philippopolis, the last really soft post that Providence and the Foreign Office bestowed on me.

CHAPTER VII.

THE AFTERMATH OF A MASSACRE.

In the interval between 1888, when I was last in Constantinople, and my temporary return to the British Consulate in 1896, that establishment had had rather a chequered career, almost justifying Sir William White, whose classical allusions were never remarkable for pedantic accuracy, in dubbing it as he did "the Ægean stables." The trouble was partly owing to the fact that there were two institutions under one roof—the Supreme Consular Court and the Consulate proper. The old system was for the Judge to be at the same time Consul-General, with a Consul under him to administer the purely Consular business. There was also an Assistant-Judge. I think that this was not a bad solution of the problem, though it did not work ideally; but when a vacancy occurred in the Judgeship, the post of Consul-General was abolished, the Assistant-Judge was appointed Judge, the Consul remained Consul, and Court and Consulate became entirely separate establishments, though, as before, located in the same building. Their functions overlapped to some extent, and Judge and Consul quarrelled vigorously. Then the clerks started fighting

amongst themselves over a vineyard and a wine-making enterprise in which they were interested, and, I believe, indulged in a little private litigation. But the most unfortunate accident of all arose when one of the clerks of the Court, being got rid of for very good cause, retorted by bringing an action for wrongful dismissal against the Judge in his own Court. A Judge had to be imported from outside to try the case, and the late Mr Alfred Lyttelton, K.C., was sent out from England by the Foreign Office to defend the action. The plaintiff was non-suited, but the affair must have cost the taxpayer a pretty penny altogether; and though the Judge's conduct had been absolutely correct all through, the incident was a decided nuisance.

All this happened before I came, but though the storm had blown over, wreckage still encumbered the waters in the shape of charges brought by the dismissed official against former colleagues, which I had reason to remember, as I spent the whole of Christmas Day writing out a report on the subject.

The work one had to deal with at the Consulate much resembled that at Smyrna, except that there was more of it, and of course a correspondingly larger staff, and that all judicial duties fell to the Supreme Court. In one respect Smyrna had a great advantage, for at Constantinople we were entirely overshadowed by the Embassy. I confess that I like to be cock on my own dunghill, and this a Consul can never be if he resides in a capital where there is an Embassy or a Legation. Then again the Embassy had an unpleasing habit of unloading on to the Consulate any difficult or disagreeable

duty which its members felt disinclined or incompetent to deal with themselves. This unmanly craving for devolution was perhaps the only point on which the Chancery and Dragomanate of the Embassy were ever entirely in accord. I suppose it was human nature.

One of the more sinister instances occurred in connection with Crete. The island happened to be passing through one of its periodical paroxysms of insubordination, and in the hope of quieting the rebels they were promised reforms in the judicial system, which would give the Christian element a better chance of obtaining justice. The Great Powers accordingly instructed their Ambassadors at Constantinople (Crete was then only a Turkish province) to prepare a scheme of judicial reforms for Crete, and the Ambassadors, with a unanimity foreign to their usual habits, passed the job on to their Consuls.

None of us had ever been in Crete or knew aught about the conditions prevailing there, and only one, the Frenchman, was anything of a lawyer. However, we did our best to hammer out a scheme, and then wrangled over its details with delegates from the Porte. When the terms were finally agreed on and sent down to Crete for application, the Cretans broke out in their final and successful rebellion, and our beautiful scheme found its last home in the waste-paper basket.

Had I any premonition that I myself should one day be stationed in Crete the task might have been of interest. As it was, it proved an unmitigated bore, which entailed hours and hours of absence from my proper duties, and led my colleagues and

me to use regrettably strong language about Ambassadors.

Other preoccupations, of a more interesting nature, arose out of the massacre.

The Constantinople massacre of 1896, though quite eclipsed by the more wholesale killings of Armenians perpetrated in recent years, caused an enormous sensation in Europe at the time it occurred. It was not the first occasion on which Sultan Abdul Hamid had thought fit to read a stern lesson to his Armenian subjects, nor was it to be the last; but happening as it did in the capital itself and before the eyes of the representatives of most of the civilised Powers, the inevitable Turkish denials and excuses were less convincing than usual, and the Sultan was convicted beyond all question of a ruthless ferocity which any of his mediæval predecessors might have envied.

The following is a brief account of what occurred. At about one o'clock in the afternoon of Wednesday, 26th August, a band of twenty-five Armenians, armed with revolvers and some of them carrying sacks full of bombs, dynamite, and ammunition, rushed the Ottoman Bank in Galata, after killing or wounding the guards at the door, took possession of the bank building, barricaded the doors with sacks of silver coin, and held up the staff of the establishment, with the exception of Sir Edgar Vincent, the director, whose office was on the top storey, and who had time with the sub-director to escape through a skylight and across the roof into the premises of the tobacco *régie* next door.

For an hour or two police and troops endeavoured

to eject these desperadoes, who fired revolvers and threw bombs at them through the windows; but when it became evident that in the last resort the Armenians were determined to blow up the bank with the Europeans and the treasure inside rather than surrender, negotiations were begun for evacuation, and eventually the survivors, seventeen in number, were given safe-conducts and escorted to Sir E. Vincent's yacht lying in the Bosphorus, whence they were transferred to a French steamer and shipped to Marseilles.

Outbreaks on a smaller scale occurred in other quarters of the city, more in the nature of diversions in support of the attack on the bank than anything else, and were dealt with by the police without much difficulty. By holding up the bank and threatening to blow it up with its European staff and the European wealth it contained, the conspirators had hoped to blackmail the foreign Powers into coercing the Sultan and obliging him to confer administrative reforms and political privileges on his Armenian subjects.

It was well known beforehand that something was in the air, although the actual attack took an unexpected form, and the Turks prepared in their own peculiar way to counter it. The number of soldiers and police in Constantinople would have been amply sufficient to quell any possible rising, but owing to some special process of reasoning it seemed better to let loose the Constantinople mob to deal with it, and within an hour of the assault on the bank, hordes of lewd fellows of the baser sort, who had obviously received instructions before-

hand how they were to act, appeared in the streets, armed for the most part with clubs shaped to one uniform pattern, and knocked on the head every Armenian they met. Under the guidance of the police these ruffians entered Armenian houses, and offices and warehouses where Armenians were employed, and whether they met with resistance or not dragged their wretched victims out to slaughter them, all the time, to quote the words of the Blue Book, "in high spirits and laughing like children on a holiday." The frantic expostulations and even threats of the foreign representatives produced no effect on the bland composure of Abdul Hamid, and the killing went on until the night of the next day, when, either thinking that a sufficient lesson had been taught, or that he had gone as far as was safe, he gave orders to the troops to intervene, and calm was restored as if by magic.

In a day and a half, according to the estimate of sober and well-informed persons, between 6000 and 8000 Armenians, mostly of the lower classes, had been done to death, and of these it is sure that nine out of ten were perfectly innocent.

No one can deny that the provocation came originally from the Armenian side, and that the Turkish authorities would have been perfectly well justified in using all possible severity towards armed and unscrupulous rebels; but nothing could excuse their employment of the mob and indiscriminate massacre instead of using the disciplined forces at their command to arrest and punish the guilty.

Isolated incidents continued to occur during the next two or three weeks, such as the throwing of

a bomb or the firing of shots at Turkish soldiers by some scatter-brained Armenian agitator, but order had been completely re-established when I reached Constantinople at the end of September, though everybody still felt uneasy and nervous.

The Constantinople mob, on the principle that all work and no play makes Jack a dull boy, had combined the duty of slaying Armenians with the pleasure of plundering the shops and business premises they entered in search of victims; and as many of the establishments in Galata which thus suffered were the property of British subjects, the massacre resulted in a crop of claims for compensation which had to be investigated and sifted. I was appointed with Mr Max Muller of the Embassy and Mr Gilchrist, a leading British business man of Constantinople, as a Commission to look into these claims. The total amount demanded as compensation by British subjects came to something over £100,000. The Commission pruned this down to £20,000, and even so, when the reduced amounts were sworn to by the claimants, I fear that a touch of perjury was not always absent. It was astonishing to hear how presumably prudent traders had left their safes open when they went out to lunch on 26th August, and how by a lamentable coincidence their wives' jewellery happened to be in the safes on that particular day exposed to the depredations of the populace. The occasion was, of course, one on which damages would not be underestimated, but some of the claims quite exceeded the bounds of delicacy, if not of common honesty.

After I left I believe that other claims came in,

and that the bill finally presented to the Turkish Government was nearer £30,000 than £20,000. The Turks refused to recognise liability, on the ground that the losses were due to a civil commotion which might happen to any Government, and which was more like the act of God or the king's enemies than anything else. From this position they refused to budge, and as in the end they were forced to pay up, the amount at stake was tacked on to the cost of a cruiser they had ordered from Messrs Armstrong, and they thus saved their face.

In the course of its investigations the Commission inspected most of the premises which had been pillaged, and on one of these visits, to a wholesale grocery store which had been completely gutted, I noted a circumstance which was not without its touching side. Nothing was left in the store but bare shelves, but in one corner there lay a number of clubs, some of them bearing grisly signs of the use to which they had been put, and amongst these a little tiny cudgel, fit for a child to wield. It was easy to reconstruct the scene. One proud father had evidently taken his small son with him to learn how to strike a blow for Islam, and when the band of patriots rushed into the store and saw the toothsome loot displayed, one and all cast down their clubs as encumbrances and set to work to remove it. Little Hassan, or Ali, or whatever the brat's name was, too, laid aside his miniature weapon, picked up a pot of jam or a tin of biscuits, and ran home to show his mamma how he had despoiled the infidel.

The case for compensation against the Turks

would of course be strengthened if it could be shown that Government servants had taken a hand in the looting, and this, as a matter of fact, did occur, and a witness of it was in our hands. He was an Armenian foreman in the employ of a British mohair firm in Stamboul, who, when the rioting began, hid himself amongst some bales of mohair in the warehouse, and was able to watch through a chink and see the rabble, accompanied by Turkish soldiers, break in and help themselves to any portable property that was about. He had subsequently been brought to the Embassy by his masters, and remained there ever since; and though the Turks demanded that he should be given up to them for trial as a "revolutionary," the Ambassador, Sir Philip Currie, refused to comply, and there the man stayed for a couple of months. He was perfectly safe so long as he remained on the Embassy premises, which were British territory, but pretty sure to be captured if he ventured outside, and it was known that the police were on the watch for him.

Every time that Sir Philip left the Embassy he found the Armenian waiting for him just inside the gates, ready to dissolve into copious tears and moans as soon as he approached, until the nuisance became too great to be borne, and the Ambassador sent for me and told me I must get his unwelcome guest out of the country.

Now we had had refugee Armenians of our own at the Consulate, and had got rid of them ourselves; there were swarms of fat dragomans and secretaries kicking their heels about the Embassy who had

more time at their disposal than the Consul, and might well have taken on the job, and I felt very indignant that it should be foisted on to me, whom it did not in the least concern. However, Sir Philip was hardly the man to whom I should care to represent these considerations, and there was nothing for it but obedience.

By good fortune a British gunboat was to leave Malta for Constantinople in two or three days, and I arranged with her commander that a boat should be waiting at a precise spot on the quay at a certain hour on the day of sailing. When the day arrived, I went up to the Embassy and approached the Ambassador with a request for the loan of his carriage to give prestige to the undertaking. He replied that he would see me very considerably farther before he would lend me his carriage. I said, "Sir Philip, let me take an Embassy Cavass to sit on the box, as his scarlet uniform will be more impressive than the chocolate-coloured garb of a Consulate Cavass." No; he would not give me one of his Cavasses—a Consulate Cavass would do quite well enough. I then played my last card in the shape of an inquiry as to whether I was to resist in the event of an attempt by the police to stop us. To my delight, this seemed to stump the Ambassador, but after a few moments' reflection he replied bravely, "Certainly you will resist!"

As my only weapon was a not very sharp umbrella, I do not think I could have done very much in the way of resistance.

The Armenian was disguised in some one's cast-off bowler in place of his fez, a ramshackle closed cab

was called in, and off we started down the Petits Champs to Galata at breakneck speed, six or seven miles an hour at least. It was not precisely a joy-ride, for I really felt some apprehension lest we might be molested, and this was evidently the opinion of my charge as well. As soon as the cab got outside the Embassy gates and into the street, he began to groan loudly in the most heart-rending manner. I jabbed him sharply in the ribs with my elbow to stop him, but whenever I ceased jabbing he began again, so alternately jabbing and groaning we rattled over the stones, until at last the cab stopped at the rendezvous on the quay. And then the boat was not there! However, we saw it alongside seventy yards away, and the Cavass taking one arm and I the other of the Armenian, now in a state of collapse, we ran him along the quay and into the boat, which rowed him off to the ship, and his troubles were over.

A further source of occupation arising out of the massacre cropped up in the shape of administering the funds collected for the relief of the Armenian sufferers. The murder of thousands of bread-winners had left their families in most cases in a state of complete destitution, and with winter near their situation would have been deplorable without the help which came from abroad. The distribution of the succour was put into the hands of the local missionaries, who were mostly Americans, and Sir Philip Currie told me off to act as his representative on the Committee. The office was much of a sinecure, until one day I came into conflict with my reverend colleagues over what I considered,

perhaps foolishly, as a diversion of our funds to an unauthorised use. One of the Americans proposed that we should pay the fare to Egypt of a Protestant Armenian who was consumptive, and needed a milder winter climate than that of Constantinople. The others all agreed, but I inquired whether his state of health was due in any way to the massacre. Oh, no! they said; he has been tuberculous for some time, but he is such a nice young Protestant that we think he ought to be helped. I pointed out that the money entrusted to us was subscribed to help those who suffered through the massacre, and not for young Protestants, however nice; and that the cost of a first-class fare to Alexandria (they insisted that he must go first-class) would keep a whole family alive through the winter. But they all hung together, repeating the parrot-cry about the nice young Protestant, and my objection met with no support. Nor did the Ambassador think that there was much in it; but he said that I need not attend any more relief meetings unless I wished —a permission of which I thankfully availed myself.

Sir Philip Currie had been brought up in the Foreign Office, and the Embassy at Constantinople was his first diplomatic post. Many years passed as Under-Secretary for Foreign Affairs and the autocrat of the Foreign Office had rendered him a little arbitrary and hardly supple enough for his new duties. Full of indignation—most righteous indignation—at the horrors of which Turkey was the scene, he allowed himself to drift into a posture of sheer antagonism towards the Sultan; and when an Ambassador and the Sovereign to whom he is

accredited are at loggerheads, it is rarely the latter who gets the worst of it. In the end, Sir Philip was transferred to what was then the less important Embassy at Rome, and without the satisfaction of seeing his humane efforts on behalf of the Armenians meet with any success. The indifference or even openly hostile attitude of other Powers rendered this hopeless.

Sir Philip may have been a bit of a martinet, but he was a very kind one, and on the whole I enjoyed serving under him. A large private income enabled him to indulge lavishly his natural bent for hospitality, which he extended to even the humbler members of his staff, and many was the excellent dinner I enjoyed at his table.

This kind-heartedness of his, and the susceptibility to the influence of feminine beauty which is the characteristic of all Ambassadors, once placed me in an awkward predicament. At the Consulate one morning I was informed that two Turkish ladies wished to see me. The occurrence was more than unusual, but I said, "Let them come in"; and there were ushered into my office two hanoums dressed in the usual way, with feridjés and yashmaks. One was elderly, the other young, and oh! how pretty—such eyes, such perfect features, such a pleasing expression, and, rarest of all in an Eastern beauty, a colour which a Devonshire girl might envy. I really think that she was the nicest-looking girl I ever set eyes on.

I asked the ladies in my best Turkish what I could do to be of service to them, and was a bit taken aback when the elder of the two answered

me in perfect English, with a suspicion of a Cockney intonation. She explained that she was an Englishwoman married to a Turk, and that this was her stepdaughter, who was betrothed to an Egyptian journalist now in England, and wished to join him there so that they might get married. Unfortunately the fiancé had given umbrage to the Sultan by espousing in print the British side of the Egyptian controversy; consequently every one connected with him was in bad odour, and it was hopeless to expect that the young lady would be granted a Turkish passport to go to England. In their trouble they had applied to the Ambassador for assistance, and had been sent by His Excellency to the Consulate to procure a British passport. In fact she produced a letter from one of the Embassy secretaries confirming her statement, and telling me that Sir Philip recommended that she should be given a passport.

To state in an official document that a person, even one of such charms, was a British subject when I knew her to be Turkish seemed a large order. On the other hand, there was the wish of the Ambassador, not to mention the imploring gazelle-like eyes of the applicant herself; and I was in a sad quandary until I remembered that there existed a regulation by which any one who applied for a passport had first to be registered as a British subject, if not already registered, and that registration was the province of the Consular Court, not the Consul. Faithful to the first principle of public service, which, as everybody knows, is to transfer responsibility to some one else's shoulders,

I sent the two ladies up to the Judge, who lived on the top storey, with a memorandum to explain the circumstances. They soon came down again, and handed me a note from the Judge saying that he really could not register the girl as a British subject, but that all the same he earnestly advocated that she should be granted a British passport! Those eyes had evidently played havoc with the stern jurist.

There was nothing else for it, and I had to refuse the poor ladies; but their distress was so great, and the younger one looked so bewitching in her sorrow, that I advised them to have another try at the Embassy. They did so, and returned triumphant in the afternoon with a letter, this time *ordering* me to make out the passport, which I did with great satisfaction. I hope that she got safely to England and made her journalist happy (lucky dog!); but I heard no more of her.

CHAPTER VIII.

BASRA.

NOT long ago I noticed in a newspaper a condemnation by some tender-hearted correspondent of the custom of immersing live shell-fish in boiling water as being unnecessarily harsh. The writer advocated instead the system of placing them in cold water to begin with and then bringing it gradually to the boil; so very much more comfortable as to amount practically to a kind of euthanasia.

The same principle would apply to persons proceeding to Basra. It is not recommended that they should arrive in the middle of the summer heat lest the shock prove too trying for them, as happened in the case of one unfortunate doctor I heard of who landed from England for the first time in July. He stood it for a month, and then pushed off in a boat to the middle of the river and incontinently drowned himself. I was myself fortunate enough to arrive late in November, when the temperature was moderate, even inclined to chilliness early in the morning and after sunset, and so became acclimatised gradually.

The usual manner of reaching Basra was, and probably still is, to take a Peninsular and Oriental

Company's steamer to Bombay, and there change into the weekly British-India boat for the Persian Gulf, which would deliver the adventurous traveller at Basra just under four weeks from the time of starting. I was, however, warned in the office of a London steamship company, which undertook to forward my heavy baggage, that, owing to the prevalence of plague at Bombay, quarantine was imposed on all British-India vessels at Basra; and that I should be wiser to ship myself on one of their own cargo-boats, with some accommodation for passengers, which was on the point of sailing, and so avoid quarantine on arrival. This seemed sound advice, and I accordingly followed it, catching the steamer in question at Marseilles. She was not a fast boat, and took just under six weeks to complete the voyage, including stops at Port Said, Suez, Aden, Muscat, Bushire, and Mohammerah on the way. The first news we received on dropping anchor in the Shat el Arab, off Basra, was that our call at Muscat, which had unrestricted communication with Bombay, was to be rewarded with ten days' quarantine, so if I had taken the P. & O., as originally planned, I should have been no worse off in this respect, besides gaining a fortnight and doing the voyage under conditions of infinitely greater comfort. But I still cling to the belief that the advice tendered to me in London was disinterested.

There are few more annoying experiences than quarantine. Under the most favourable conditions it represents so many days of one's life completely wasted; and when passed on board a ship engaged, as ours was, first in taking in coal and then hoist-

ing out cargo into lighters, it becomes a very nightmare of grime, noise, and ennui. A mile or so upriver the Union Jack could be seen floating over my future home, so near and yet so far, and from time to time British residents, free as air, came alongside in their boats to talk to the captain, and then paddled happily off again, which made the position unbearably tantalising. It would not have been so bad had the quarantine been really effective, but this was by no means the case. A native coming up from Bombay had only to land at the Persian port of Mohammerah, twenty miles down river on the left bank, and get himself rowed across to the Turkish side, where he could land at his ease, and walk up to Basra if he did not care for the slight risk of rowing all the way. A European, whose sudden appearance in Basra would always be known, could not adopt this simple ruse, and yet the native was much more likely to carry plague than he; and, after all, quarantine as a means of keeping plague away proved quite ineffective.

When the ten days were up and I was free to proceed to my domicile, it was something of a disappointment to find the house in an advanced stage of decrepitude, not at all watertight, and parts of it threatened with complete collapse. However, it sheltered me without disaster for a couple of years, until permission was obtained to rebuild and the necessary funds extracted from the Government of India. The situation was all that could be desired, with a garden extending to the river, and a creek running along one side which gave access to the club by boat when the tide was high.

The town of Basra itself lay a mile and a half inland at the extremity of the Ashar Canal communicating with the river, and a filthy place it was. The commercial quarter was built round the mouth of this canal, and had not much greater pretensions to cleanliness than the town proper, but being on the river, and so getting more ventilation, it was a cooler and slightly less unhealthy place to live in. Besides the Ashar Canal, another called the Hendek, half a mile up-river, also gave access to the town, and there were several other such waterways on either side of the Shat. These served as highways, and in place of a carriage every one kept a boat, called a bellem, a long narrow craft well adapted for negotiating the canals, along which the Basra boatmen would pole their bellems with considerable skill, and, when industriously inclined, which was seldom, at quite a respectable speed. Poling was always the method they preferred, except on the river itself, and then they would only row when going with the tide or crossing from one side to the other. In the summer awnings protected the passengers from the heat of the sun, and one could recline with great comfort on cushions in the bottom of the boat.

Basra possessed no system of drainage. The canals and their banks served as latrines for the population, as places of ablution, and as receptacles for refuse. The falling tide washed everything away down to the river, and we drank the river water, there being none other to drink except that of the canals, which was worse.

Some romantic traveller once christened Basra "The Venice of the East," but beyond canals,



BASRA

boats, and smells I saw no points of resemblance with the Queen of the Adriatic. The houses are built of yellow brick or of mud. Those of any pretension look well enough from a distance, with their large "Shahnishin" balcony windows projecting two or three feet from the walls, and with palm-trees dotted amongst them. Indeed the general effect of houses, palms, boats, Arabs, and water is, from the point of view of the painter or the photographer, wonderfully picturesque; looked at with the eye of the sanitarian, particularly when the tide is low and only a trickle of water runs down the middle of the canal's muddy bed, it is wholly beastly.

Things were rather better along the bank of the river itself. Here there were large houses with gardens round them, and no overcrowding. All the British firms, as well as some of the wealthy natives, had their houses and go-downs on the river. Facilities for shipping and commerce there were none, not so much as a jetty or crane. The port certainly boasted of a custom-house, but not half large enough for the needs of the place, and goods had to lie out for months in the open air while waiting to be transported up-river to Bagdad. I hear that since the war Basra has been transformed in this respect, and is as much over-equipped as it then was under-equipped for a commercial port, and that the place is quite unrecognisable.

The trade was almost entirely in British hands. No German had yet planted his unhallowed foot in the Persian Gulf; British steamers alone frequented the port of Basra; and the Euphrates and Tigris Steam Navigation Company's vessels did the lion's

share of the carrying trade up the Tigris to Bagdad, the competing Turkish Company, slow and unreliable, having to content itself with their leavings.

There were at this time four British firms established in Basra—Grey, Mackenzie, & Co.; Lynch Brothers (who ran the river steamers); the Basra Trading Co.; and Hotz, Hamilton, & Co. Each of them had a large house and extensive premises, and their British employees all lived together in the firm's house, about a dozen in all on the average. Then there were our doctor and myself, and generally one or two ladies. I do not remember there ever being more than three Englishwomen there together at one time.

The doctor was not a luxury but a necessity in so unhealthy a spot, and the custom was for the four firms and the Consulate to subscribe a salary sufficient, with the prospect of local private practice thrown in, to induce a young medical man from England to settle in Basra and look after the health of the community. I had brought a new leech out with me, but he only survived the climate a couple of years, and was then invalided home and replaced by a more seasoned practitioner from India.

Small as our community was, it managed to maintain a club, with a billiard-table, a tennis-court, and other amenities, and here all congregated every evening before dinner, and generally after dinner too, to play billiards or whist (bridge had not yet reached this part of the Turkish Empire) in great amity. There were too few to allow the luxury of quarrelling, but one small question did exist to enliven the annual general meetings. The members

of the club were divided by a definite line of demarcation into shareholders and non-shareholders, with interests diametrically opposed. The latter were all for free trade and cheap drinks, while the shareholders, not unnaturally, stood out for prices which would allow of an adequate return on their invested capital; and for all the prospect there was in my time of a definite solution to this conflict of interests, it may continue to the present day.

Although all were of purely British extraction, the manners and customs of the community were modelled rather on those of India than of the Mother Country. We called our meals chota hazri and tiffin, made all bets in rupees, procured any luxuries in the way of food from Bombay, and were cursed with cooks from the Portuguese settlement of Goa. These latter, as may be imagined, did not accept service in far-off and unhealthy Basra until their incompetency or villainy had rendered it difficult for them to obtain employment in India, and I never knew a more drunken set of swabs. He was accounted a model of sobriety who postponed getting dead drunk until after dinner had been served up in the evening. The local raki, distilled from dates, was a cheap and potent spirit enough, but our cooks preferred their masters' whisky if they could get it. One cordon bleu in my employ smashed my tantalus-stand with a poker to get at his favourite drink. Whenever a dinner-party was given the host's cook used to summon the cooks from the houses of the guests to come to his assistance, and always started the preparations for the banquet by demanding a bottle of whisky to maintain the strength of

his colleagues and himself. Sometimes the brand proffered did not meet with approval, and another was asked for, on the ground that "Mr So-and-So's cook cannot drink Black and White," or whatever the brand might be. They were dishonest rascals, too, and overcharged their masters exorbitantly for the provisions they purchased. It was no use trying to bowl them out by comparing notes with another householder, for the cooks held periodical meetings to fix prices, and everybody was mulcted in the same way.

Bad as they were, we had to put up with them as long as possible, for it took a month at least to get another from Bombay; the steamer fares of outgoer and incomer had to be paid, and there was but the faintest hope that a change would be for the better. These Goanese cooks bore high-sounding names with the prefix "Don," but were all as black as your boots.

The British Consulate too had hitherto been run entirely from India, members of the Indian Political Service being appointed to the post, and the Government of India defraying all expenses, as was the case with the Consulate-General at Bagdad and most Consulates in the south of Persia. Either the unhealthiness of the place, its heat, its lack of social advantages, or the three combined made it a matter of great difficulty to induce officials from the Indian service to remain any considerable time in Basra; and in the end the British firms protested to the home Government that their interests suffered from the frequent changes, which never gave any one Consul time to become acquainted with the require-

ments of his post. The complaint was brought to the notice of the Indian Government, which admitted the truth of the allegation, and offered to renounce in favour of the Foreign Office a piece of patronage which was only a nuisance to itself, while continuing to pay the cost of the establishment. The offer was accepted, and led to my appointment. The change of régime at least made for permanency, for I remained nearly five years, and only left on promotion, while my successor stuck it for over ten—in fact, until the outbreak of war upset everything.

The staff I inherited consisted of a Clerk, a Dragoman, three Cavasses, and three boatmen, the first two native Christians and the rest Moslems. The clerk was chiefly remarkable for the utter illegibility of his handwriting, a defect in one holding his particular office, and for an exuberant physical development which won for him the cognomen of the Fat Boy. He was a good fellow, and well-liked by the community, to whom his idiomatic English was a source of continual joy, though sometimes startling to outsiders, as in the case of an American missionary, who, having occasion to beg him not to forget some little business, was reassured in the words, uttered in all innocence, "No bloody fear, old boy." The Fat Boy was fond of telling me how he once had to forward to the Consul-General at Bagdad a pair of valuable sporting dogs brought from England at a vast price, "the most costive dogs, sir, I ever heard of."

The Dragoman did not remain long in my service, for he was detected in betraying the interests of a

British firm engaged in litigation before the local court, and had to be summarily dismissed. As for the Cavasses, the less said the better. The shifty Arab is hardly adapted for a post which requires integrity and fidelity from its occupants, and I often had occasion to regret the honest if rather stupid Turks who had served me in this capacity elsewhere.

A small settlement of American missionaries belonging to the Dutch Reformed Church struggled manfully with the hopeless task of converting Moslem Arabs to Christianity. Their score at this time only amounted to one convert, and on his *bona-fides* a certain doubt was thrown by the fact that he had only turned Protestant when about to be prosecuted for embezzling the funds of the Bagdad regiment to which he was paymaster, in the hope, doomed to disappointment, of thereby obtaining foreign protection. However, he figured in the Annual Reports as Hussein the Martyr. The Moslems did not by any means appreciate the efforts of the missionaries to induce them to change their religion, and sometimes became very restive under them. Turkish authorities, when they dared, would put spokes in the wheels of the good men, as when a prudish Caimacam up the river arrested one of their colporteurs (pronounced "coal-porters") and confiscated his stock of Bibles, on the ground that they contained improper stories calculated to pollute the pure minds of the subjects of the Sultan. He particularly objected to an anecdote concerning Lot and his daughters.

The only other foreigners were Persians and a

few Greeks, and the sole foreign representative (until a Russian Consul was appointed about a year before I left) the Persian Consul-General. No one lived at Basra for pleasure. Nor were there any Turkish residents apart from officials, and even they were sent there as a rule because their careers elsewhere had been open to criticism. The Vali in office when I arrived was removed from his previous more desirable government in Asia-Minor on the demand of the British Embassy for his share in an extensive massacre of Armenians. However lurid his past may have been, his present aspect was far from ferocious; his manners were courteous and suave as those of a well-bred Turk usually are, and he was always turned out like a new pin.

This Vali did not remain with us very long, but I attended one public function in his company—the opening of a municipal hospital. The edifice was incomplete, only the ground floor having been built, but so much money had been spent on it, or, at any rate, had disappeared, that it was considered desirable to declare the institution open in order to avoid inconvenient inquiries from Constantinople. All the higher officials and the notables of the place attended, and the proceedings began with a really impressive service of prayer. After that the Vali inspected the guard of honour, walking slowly down their lines, while the Divisional General, Mohsin Pasha, dragged me behind him, held tightly by the hand. This is a special mark of favour from the Turkish point of view, but is calculated to make the unaccustomed European feel rather sheepish. We then adjourned to a room in the hospital, which

had been extemporised as a ward and fitted with a dozen bedsteads. All the surgical instruments from the military hospital on the other side of the river were laid out on a small table, a fearsome collection of rusty ironmongery, and on each bedstead a patient was seated, commandeered for the occasion from the bazaar. They had even brought in a British-Indian subject as a compliment to me. It was all make-believe, but everybody played up admirably, and the Vali went from bed to bed inquiring of each patient what his malady was, and addressing to him a few appropriate words of sympathy and encouragement. But even the Vali's aplomb failed him and he passed on in silence when one of them replied to his query, "Me? Oh, I'm a lunatic!"

After the opening ceremony the instruments were sent back to the military hospital, the patients returned to their ordinary avocations, and I never heard of the hospital being completed.

When this Vali left us his place was taken by an Engineer Rear-Admiral in the Turkish Navy, who possessed a bushy red beard, and if put into a kilt would have made a perfect Scotsman. He was very friendly to the English, which perhaps contributed to make his stay in Basra rather short. Mohsin Pasha succeeded him, combining the functions of Governor-General and Commandant, which he managed to retain until I left the country. He was quite a superior man, well educated, and a good soldier. We were always on cordial terms, and the Pasha was not averse to mixing to some extent in the social life of the English. He would even look

on at a cricket match, from which I cannot believe that he derived any real pleasure.

My chief friend amongst the Turks was the Commodore, an officer of about seventy, who had attained the rank of Commander in the Turkish Navy. The warships under his command rarely exceeded two —a gunboat and a trooper,—but he had civilian duties as well in the capacity of Director of a line of decrepit river-steamers which plied between Basra and Bagdad under the Turkish flag. I do not think that he was much of a business man or took any very active part in the management of the enterprise, but he was its head, and as such certainly had opportunities of making a bit for himself. And yet, strange to say, he did not. This was universally recognised, so much so that when any one mentioned Yakoob Bey they almost always added mechanically, "An honest man." His deserved reputation for integrity gave him a certain prestige amongst the natives, and caused him to be looked on as something rare and even precious.

It is but just to explain that this was over twenty years ago. I cannot speak from personal experience of the young Turks, and it may be that in Angora nowadays upright officials are as common as blackberries, but in the spacious times of Sultan Abdul Hamid, Diogenes would have had his work cut out to discover one with his lantern.

The Commodore was not what one could call a scientific officer, and made no claim to be one. He told me with simple glee the story of how he passed the only examination of his career by means of downright cribbing. "I was a lieutenant in Con-

stantinople at the time," he said, "and suddenly an Iradé appeared calling on all naval officers to be examined. I was no Mektebli (one who has passed through the naval school), and when they sat me down with a paper of questions to answer all about figures and angles, I thought I should have gone mad. But there was a young man sitting near me and studying from a book. I said to him, 'Koozoom (my lamb), just look at these questions and tell me whether the answers can be found in your book.' He read the questions, and replied that certainly all were to be found in the book. So I made him show me them, and I wrote them down and gave in my paper. There were three examiners —two Turkish captains and an English Pasha,—and when the English Pasha read my answers, he said, 'This officer ought to have full marks.' But the Turkish captain said, 'No! He is not a Mektebli, and if we give him full marks the Mekteblis will be justly affronted. We will give him only 90 per cent.' But a fortnight after I was appointed navigating lieutenant of an ironclad!"

At that time Abdul Hamid's battleships never left the placid waters of the Golden Horn, so the appointment was not so fraught with danger to the Turkish Navy as might at first sight appear.

He was a dear old fellow, good-tempered, scrupulously clean in his person, and full of the milk of human kindness. Simple, too, to the point of believing any yarn which was told him. He assured me that the aborigines of Australia possessed tails a foot long. He knew it, because an Armenian who visited the antipodes had told him so. Another



A BASRA CANAL.

fixed belief of his, which no argument of mine could eradicate, was that the wealthier classes in England habitually passed the winter in submarine dwellings to avoid the notorious inclemency of the weather. I suppose he must have seen some old picture of a diving-bell with people in it, otherwise the theory is quite unaccountable.

One fault the old gentleman had. He was parsimonious, and his domestic felicity was seriously affected thereby. No wife would stay long with him, as none could stand the limited commissariat he provided. In theory a Moslem woman cannot divorce her husband, but in practice she is able to make his life such a burden to him that he is driven to divorce her. And this is what a succession of brides did to the poor Commodore. At last, in desperation, he espoused an Arab girl, the sister of one of his bluejackets, and the match turned out a complete success. Not only did the new wife, less accustomed than her higher-class predecessors to fleshpots, content herself with the fare her husband provided, but in due course she presented him with a daughter, who became the joy of the old man's existence.

I do not think that the Commodore's frugal views on the subject of rations were due solely to his passion for thrift. As a matter of fact, he could eat nothing but spoon-food himself, as he possessed only one tooth, and was either too conservative or too economical to invest in an artificial set. The survivor was a magnificent specimen—large, white, and set prominently in the front of his upper jaw. He told me all about it one day.

"I see, Consolos Bey, that you are admiring my tooth. I will tell you its history. Years ago, when Senior Naval Officer at Rhodes, I was seized with the most violent toothache. When able to bear it no longer I sent for the naval surgeons on the station—there were three of them—and ordered them to search at once in their books for a remedy for my toothache. They retired, and came back next day to report that they had been unable to discover any remedy. I drove them out of the house, and sent for a barber who bore a great reputation as a tooth-puller. I said to him, 'Examine my teeth, and tell me whether you can undertake to extract them all.' He looked them over carefully, and replied, 'On my head be it, I will take them out every one.' He laid me on my back on the floor, sat on my chest, and set to work. Mashallah, what an Usta he was! In five minutes the floor was covered with teeth. But this one—tapping the veteran—defied all his efforts, and at last he had to acknowledge himself beaten. Naturally I paid him nothing, as he had not executed his contract. No sooner had he departed than the naval surgeons came in again, salaamed, and said, 'Sir, we have discovered a remedy for your toothache.' The cuckolds, the pimps!"

The only Turkish official I fell foul of was the Custom House Director, a gentleman given to the vice of hypocrisy, rare amongst the Turks, and who continually boasted of an honesty which he rarely practised. He appeared in a not very favourable light soon after my arrival in Basra, when I was delegated to take evidence on commission concern-

ing a case then pending in the High Court at home. The circumstances were rather curious. Messrs X., a British firm, held a Bill of Lading from a steamship company for eighty-one bales of wool purporting to have been shipped from Basra, but the bales were not forthcoming when the vessel arrived in London. Messrs X. claimed their wool on the strength of the shipping document, but the owners of the steamer, having ascertained that the Basra Custom House books contained no record of any such transaction, asserted that the Bill of Lading must have been issued in error; hence litigation at home, and my task of taking evidence on the spot.

What had actually happened was that Messrs X., in their zeal for thrift, had arranged with the Customs that the wool should be shipped unofficially, and that half the amount of 1 per cent due on it as export duty should be paid to the Customs officials in return for their kindness, the firm pocketing the other half and the Turkish Government losing the whole. They could not, however, expose this transaction openly.

When the moment arrived for taking the evidence of the Customs officials, I requested the Director to send them round to the Consulate for the purpose. He declined to do so, but was willing that the proceedings should be conducted at the Custom House, provided that he himself were present, so the Commission transferred itself to that establishment. The Customs witnesses, of course, swore that it was absolutely impossible for goods to be shipped without appearing in the Custom House

books, and that consequently the eighty-one bales never left Basra. On a question being put which tended to throw doubt on this point, the Director at once intervened, protesting with honest indignation against any aspersion being cast on the integrity of a Turkish establishment, and forbade his subordinates to answer any further questions. So the Commission had to be content with such evidence as it had already got.

The cream of the whole joke lay in the fact, which soon after transpired, that the wool was lying in the London Custom House all the time, having been somehow overlooked.

Whether on account of this scandal or from natural perversity, the Director set himself deliberately to annoy British traders in the thousand and one small ways possible to a malevolent Customs official, but in so ingenious a manner as to furnish little ground for a formal complaint. But he met his Waterloo at last, when a British gunboat in the river received by merchant steamer a consignment of stuff for the use of the crew, including some cases of bottled beer. The goods were duly landed at the Custom House, and I sent a Cavass to clear them, armed with a declaration of the contents signed by the commander and myself, which should have passed them through. Unfortunately for the Director, the cases of beer were labelled "Revolver Brand," perhaps in reference to the deadly nature of the contents, and each one of them had stamped on its lid the picture of a formidable revolver. Now in those days a foreign man-of-war, though it could come into a Turkish harbour full up with warlike

munitions of all sorts, was prohibited from shipping such things in port, and the Director jumped to the conclusion that here was an attempt to evade the regulations. He therefore disregarded the official declaration accompanying the goods, and forced open the cases, as he had no business to do, feeling no doubt that the discovery of some scores of revolvers would justify his arbitrary action. One can imagine his feelings of disgust when the contents proved to be comparatively innocent bottles of beer, and a complaint to the Porte brought about his dismissal.

Of the climate of Basra, the best I can say is that I found it not quite so black as it had been painted. The heat was certainly awful. It was only during my last summer that I was supplied with reliable instruments for taking meteorological observations; and though this was certainly the coolest hot season I experienced, there were 116 days in the year on which the shade temperature exceeded 100°, and the highest recorded was over 115°. At night it might go down to 90°. The highest temperature occurred when a dry north wind was blowing across the desert, but 110° or more under such conditions were far less trying than when the wind changed to the south, and came charged with moisture from the Persian Gulf. This brought the temperature down, as far as the thermometer was concerned, but turned a European into a limp rag. There are parts of India where the thermometer records more degrees of heat than at Basra, but the Englishman in India has many of the resources of civilisation to mitigate his suffer-

ings. At Bagdad, too, which in the height of summer is hotter than Basra, the inhabitants retire to cool underground apartments, and there æstivate in comparative comfort; whereas at Basra this refuge is denied, for directly you begin to excavate you come to water. All we could do was to pass the days on the ground-floors of our houses, which were built to keep out the heat as far as possible with enormously thick walls and few windows, and to have punkahs going continually. At night one slept on the roof, so as to profit by any breeze which might be going. On south-wind nights, or when there was no wind at all, sleep was all but impossible, and there was little for it but to walk about the roof and long for the dawn.

An ice-making apparatus did exist in Basra. It was the property of a Jew, who contracted for the supply of bread to the troops in the district, and made a good thing out of his contract. At the beginning of each hot weather he manfully started making ice, but as all the Turkish officials in the place naturally expected to be supplied, and as naturally declined to pay their bills, and he dared not dun them for fear of losing his bread contract, the machine always managed to break down by the beginning of July, and we had to do without ice for the rest of the summer. In a north wind the enormous native jars of porous clay made efficient coolers, but they were worse than useless otherwise, and one of the greatest trials was the impossibility of getting a really cold drink under such conditions.

Food, too, lacked variety, and one got deadly

tired of eternal fowls and mutton, for no beef was procurable except occasionally in the winter. Vegetables were very scarce except out of a tin, and we depended for the supply of potatoes on a few brought up, generally half-rotten, from Bombay. In one respect nature stretched a point in our favour, for in summer prawns and a species of sole came up from the sea in the fresh water as far as Basra, and afforded a most agreeable variety in the daily menu. I have never tasted such good prawns as these eccentric creatures, particularly when impaled on slivers of wood and grilled. The usual practice was to supply an Arab fisherman with a net, on condition that he gave up all the soles and prawns he might catch, while keeping the inferior fish for himself. It is not to be supposed that he ever kept to his contract in this respect, but one got something.

If the summer was a trying time, it would be difficult to say too much in favour of the Basra winter. During November, December, and January, the weather was perfectly glorious, bright cloudless days, sufficiently cold to brace one up for the next hot weather, and, very occasionally, a degree or two of frost at night. Snow was unknown, and a wet day a rarity. The annual rainfall did not exceed seven inches, but when it did rain it poured, and the streets, which were merely mud-tracks stamped flat by the traffic, became quagmires. After a day's wet, if the tide in my creek was too low for a bellem, I had to ride to the club in the evening, and cannot have presented a very dignified appearance clinging to the back of a boatman and holding out a lantern

in front of him to guide his staggering footsteps. But it was the custom so to do, and my mount never let me down.

I cannot conscientiously call Basra a healthy place, though it hardly deserved its current reputation as a mere death-trap. Few escaped malaria in a persistent and debilitating form. Smallpox was endemic, and visitations of cholera occurred at intervals; but what foreigners dreaded most was liver complaint, and it was understood that unless the bowels were kept open and regular exercise was taken, congestion of that organ, probably ending in an abscess, was sure to come sooner or later. In consequence all played tennis violently in the evening throughout the summer, though the heat made it more of a pain than a pleasure, and imbibed Hunyadi Janos by the pint.

Plague and cholera both made their appearance once during my stay in Basra, but not in a violent form, and no Europeans fell victims. Two British Indians, however, died of plague, and I had some trouble over the disposal of their remains. Their religion demanded cremation, but when the funeral party went out into the desert to perform the ceremony, a mob of Arabs armed with clubs came up and prevented it by force, on the ground that the ashes would be borne on the breeze and spread infection over the country round. In the end I had to get a party of gendarmes to accompany me to the English cemetery five miles up the river and stand guard while the bodies were burned within its precincts.

Two bad epidemics of cholera visited Basra within

a few years after I left, and took terrible toll of the little British colony.

There is one very unpleasant affliction to which dwellers in Mesopotamia are liable, in the shape of the Bagdad boil. The name is rather misleading, for the creature is really an open sore, generally about the size of a half-crown, though sometimes considerably bigger. I have seen one which almost covered the back of a man's hand. They invariably appear on the parts of the body unprotected by clothing, the hands, the face, and the feet, and are caused by the bite of a mosquito, which has become infected in some special way. No method of treating them is of the slightest use, unless a new one has been introduced since my time, and the sufferer has to grin and bear it until the sore has run its appointed course, and dries up of itself, leaving a permanent white scar. In the case of the Bagdad boil this usually takes a year, but the Basra variety is kinder and disappears in six months or so. The sores, though terribly unsightly, give little or no pain. I had one on the upper part of my foot, but by cutting a piece out of my boot just over it I was able to go out shooting much as if nothing was the matter, and the "boil" seemed none the worse.

Our doctor—the only medical man in the place, except an American missionary and Turkish army surgeons, who hardly counted—had a rather extensive practice amongst the Arabs, some of it remunerative, but the greater part amongst the poorer class, who were unable to pay a fee, but afforded admirable experience to a young man keen on his profession. In a country where the coroner is unknown, he slashed

away with a light heart, and successfully performed operations which the most expert surgeons at home would hardly attempt without all the paraphernalia of an hospital at their back. The poor Arab is a teetotaller, and to all intents and purposes a vegetarian, so his wounds heal up with marvellous facility. My official duties not being overwhelming, I was often called in to give such help as I could in the operations by administering chloroform, nipping arteries, and suchlike chores. I remember one occasion when the doctor was operating for stone, and had ripped open the patient's belly to get at his bladder, but the three stones it contained were so large and slippery, and so tightly packed together in pyramidical form, that the forceps could not get a grip on them. Being endowed with long fingers, I volunteered to have a try, and managed to pull one out like little Jack Horner, after which the rest could be removed in the normal way. The man was up and about again in a week.

The doctor used to keep the more serious cases in his house until outside interference was no longer to be dreaded—a useful precaution, as the following case proves. When he was invalided home there was a longish interregnum until his successor arrived, and we were left without a medical attendant; but for a month or so the surgeon of H.M.S. *Redbreast*, which happened to be at Basra, kindly filled the gap, and, besides ministering to the British, took on the native patients. For convenience sake he saw them at the Consulate, and I again performed the functions of assistant. One day a peasant woman from down-river came to have a cataract removed

from her eye. The operation was successfully performed on my verandah, and the patient dismissed with the strictest injunctions not to remove her bandage until she returned to be inspected. As soon as she reached home the wise men of the village took off the bandage, diagnosed the case as one needing prompt treatment, and slapped a plaster of fresh cow-dung on her eye, which effectively ruined her chance of recovering her sight.

CHAPTER IX.

BASRA—*continued.*

BESIDES its importance as a port of transhipment for goods destined for Bagdad and Mesopotamia generally, and through Bagdad for Persia, Basra did an enormous trade in dates. In no part of the world are there so many date-trees as in the district between the town and the Persian Gulf. Nine-tenths or more of the population live on dates, with a little bread; and the cultivation of the palms, requiring no labour beyond that involved in pruning, picking, and keeping the irrigation ditches open, is admirably adapted to the lazy disposition of the Arabs. It was with reason that the Prophet instructed his disciples to "reverence the date-tree, for she is your aunt," and it was from mud taken from the root of a palm that, according to Moslem tradition, the first man was created.

For a couple of months in the year, beginning when the dates were approaching ripeness towards the end of August, the usually rather torpid town awoke to sudden activity. A meeting of growers and exporters to fix the price of dates inaugurated the season. Long ago there may have been some practical utility in this confabulation, but by now it had become a meaningless ceremony, kept up merely in a spirit



LITTLE SLAVES.



GATHERING DATES.

of conservatism, for no one adhered to the agreement unless it suited him, and prices fluctuated according to the law of supply and demand. Then the din of universal hammering arose as hundreds of thousands of boxes were put together from nails and boards sent out ready from Scandinavia. When the picking began, packing establishments called Chadoks were established in the palm-groves along the river banks, and to them resorted all the ragamuffin Arabs from the country round—men, women, and children, filthy and half-naked—to profit by the only season in the year when regular wages were forthcoming. The men for the most part acted as porters, while the women packed. It was an edifying sight to watch the packers squatted on the ground round a huge mound of dates and tightly pressing the fruit in rows in the boxes with their unclean fingers, which they moistened from time to time in a bowl of slimy water from the nearest ditch; while the babies reclined amidst the dates, naked and unrestrained, and swarms of flies browsed on the babies' eyes and faces, which they seemed to prefer even to the luscious fruit. Years ago I had witnessed the packing of figs in Smyrna, and thought the spectacle unappetising enough; but this was far worse, and I have never eaten dates since I saw them prepared for the market in Basra.

The good understanding which characterised the relations between the British firms was suspended during the date season. At other times each had its particular branch of trade, such as the export of liquorice-root, wool, or grain, while all dabbled in the import trade without treading on each other's

corns. But they all exported dates, and the rivalry to get the earliest consignments off to the markets of Europe and America was very keen. Quarrels sometimes occurred when two firms had contracts for delivery from the same grower, and the question arose which contract was to be executed first. The enterprising native clerks of one firm might piratically seize a lighter of dates on its way to another, which of course led to ill-feeling. Until the first two or three steamers had left, the club was a miserable place for an outsider, with the other members growling around at one another like a pack of surly dogs, but it did not last long.

Although most of the dates and the best qualities were carefully packed and exported in boxes, a large quantity were wrapped promiscuously in matting, and called "basket" dates. I seem to remember having partaken of this delicacy in my youth under the term of "squashed dates," the largest pennyworth a boy could buy; but most of them went to India, and at the beginning of the season numerous Indian dhows came into the river to fetch them. These vessels sometimes, with contrary winds, were very slow in getting up to Basra, and, having a goodly store of rupees on board to effect their purchases, they offered an irresistible temptation to bad characters, who continually plundered the ships and sometimes murdered the crews. One side of the river was Persian territory, the other Turkish, but the inhabitants of both sides were Arabs and much inter-related, so if a Turkish criminal was sought by the Turkish police he had only to cross the river to be quite safe amongst

friends, and *vice versa;* while each Government invariably asserted that the misdeed was committed by the other's subjects. The Turkish police was very inefficient, and the Persians had no police at all, so we had to have a British warship stationed in the river every date season for the protection of such Indian vessels.

Visits from warships were fairly frequent, and gave great pleasure both to the British residents, whose little society was in sore need of being shaken up from time to time, and also to the officers and seamen, Basra being about the only Persian Gulf port where they could anchor close enough to get on shore with ease. No ships of any considerable tonnage came up, on account of the bar at the mouth of the Shat el Arab, on which they were liable to get stuck, so our visitors were confined to little gunboats of the *Bird* class—the *Pigeon, Redbreast,* and *Lapwing,* and H.M.S. *Sphinx.* The last-named vessel was an elderly wooden paddle-ship, designed more to afford roomy and airy quarters to officers and crew in the torrid Persian Gulf where she passed her existence than for purposes of offence; but she possessed a six-inch gun, and, though this weapon was of a type long obsolete, it was the pride of the commander's heart. Oblivious of the obvious fact that the *Sphinx* would assuredly be laid up in port on the first hint of hostilities, he indulged in daydreams of the execution he would do with his culverin in the event of war; and when one day the Vali paid a visit on board, His Excellency was given as a great treat a demonstration of the working of the six-inch gun. Now the prodigy was the only

gun in the Navy still hauled about by ropes in the fashion which prevailed in Nelson's day; and when the order was given to shift her from one side of the ship to the other, and the crew started hauling on the ropes, they at once got jammed, the gun refused to budge an inch, and the show ended in a melancholy fiasco.

When a ship came up in the winter Basra always took her on at cricket. There was never any practice, and we only just managed to scrape an eleven together, but our opponents were similarly handicapped, and we generally got the better of the games. A beating which the *Sphinx's* sergeant of marines administered to the Basra team off his own bat was wiped out on a subsequent occasion. Basra knew no grass, and matches were played on matting laid in the desert on the other side of the river. What fun they were! The best batsman was not necessarily the highest scorer, for if played along the ground the ball refused to travel on the soft surface, and to make more than a single one had to lift it.

It seems that for centuries to play cricket with the crews of men-of-war has been one of the duties of a Consul, for the Rev. H. Teonge, Chaplain of H.M.S. *Assistance,* informs us in his diary that on a visit to Antioch the ship's company, accompanied by the Consul, rode out of the city early on 6th May 1676, and amongst other pastimes indulged in "Crickett."

Dull and unpleasant in some respects as Basra was, there was one point about it which compensated, in my eyes at least, for any amount of draw-

backs. The snipe-shooting in winter was really first-class. For miles up the river on both sides the foreshore swarmed with birds at low tide, and a decent bag was a certainty every time one went out. The record was 63½ couple in a day to a single gun. I never attempted to emulate this, for over-exertion in such a climate seemed unwise, but twice I brought down three snipe with a single cartridge, aiming at the point of intersection of the flights of two and picking up a third which had risen casually farther on, which shows how thick they sometimes lay. It was very comfortable shooting, the ground all firm going, with none of the quaking bogs which make some snipe-marshes such a terror. For short excursions a bellem sufficed; if one went far afield, one or other of the British firms would always lend a steam-launch, on condition that the coal was paid for; and then the outing was really luxurious, with a change of clothing and hot tea ready in the launch at the end of the day.

The bellem men acted as beaters, carried the game, and were ridden across any creek too deep to wade with comfort. My head Cavass, Haji Mukki, always accompanied me; indeed it was the only work the idle rascal ever did, but he had been broken into shooting by generations of Consuls, and submitted to it as an unavoidable evil. At one particular spot he invariably recounted an adventure which happened to one of my predecessors in the words, "Here Colonel M. shoot one cow, sir"; and it was a fact that the colonel had been so pertinaciously attacked by a demented heifer that he was forced to take its life in self-defence. A rather

frequent accident which occurred while snipe-shooting was to tickle up one of the naked Arabs engaged in cutting reeds, who had an annoying habit of popping up in unexpected places, and two officers from a gunboat got rather a bad beating from a mob of enraged villagers for doing so, as, speaking no Arabic, they were unable to negotiate the payment of the customary compensation.

In addition to the snipe, francolin frequented the reeds and scrub along the river banks. This is the bird known in India as the black partridge, though as a matter of fact it is more akin to the pheasant than the partridge. They are handsome birds, particularly the male, with his black breast feathers, and excellent eating. I once got nine brace of them in a day, besides twenty couple of snipe.

The only political question of any importance which troubled Basra was connected with the Bagdad Railway. It was not of course the Germans' intention that the line from Constantinople, for which they had just obtained a concession from the Sultan, should stop short at Bagdad; they wanted it eventually to have an outlet to the sea. Basra had various defects as a terminus, mainly because the bar at the mouth of the river acted as an impediment to ocean steamers of more than moderate dimensions, and it was understood that the Germans proposed to extend their line to a port on the Persian Gulf. Now the only place providing the requisite conditions was Koweit, an Arab town on the coast of Arabia, about eighty miles from Basra as the crow flies, and accordingly the British Government, wishing to safeguard its acknowledged interests in

this part of the world and to have something in hand when the time came to talk with the Germans about the line, negotiated an agreement with the Sheikh of Koweit, whereby that petty potentate placed himself under British protection.

This took place at the end of 1898, and was a nasty set-back to German ambitions. I believe that it was in connection with Koweit that the Kaiser sarcastically begged the British Ambassador at Berlin kindly to point out to him, if possible, some part of the world where Great Britain had not prior rights to those of all other nations.

Ostensibly the matter was between Great Britain and Turkey, not Germany, but the Turks pleaded in vain that Koweit was already under their suzerainty if not sovereignty, that Sheikh Mubarek habitually flew the Turkish flag, that he had accepted from them with complacency the office of caimacam or governor of his district, and that he had consequently no right whatever to place himself under the protection of another Power. In those happy days—now, alas! gone for ever—no one cared a bit what the Turks might say, and the British protectorate remained a fact, in spite of various little attempts they made to upset it. Whenever a Turkish gunboat from Basra made a surprise visit to Koweit in the hope of finding Mubarek napping, or a trooper filled with soldiers looked in on its way down to Katif, a British man-of-war always happened to be there to ask what the dickens they wanted, and shoo them off again.

A more serious danger arose from the internal politics of Koweit itself. Sheikh Mubarek had

attained to his lofty position by assassinating his two brothers. There was nothing out of the way in this, as Arab sheikhs generally wade through slaughter to a throne; but the brothers had left sons, who retired to Basra, and in the hope of regaining their inheritance wove continual plots against the wicked uncle, no doubt with the approval of the Turkish authorities. It was, I think, in 1902 that their efforts culminated in an open raid. The nephews filled a couple of dhows with their armed supporters, and started off from a creek half-way down the river on the Turkish side, in the hope of taking Koweit by surprise. But finding Mubarek forewarned and ready to receive them, they sheered off, only to be intercepted by H.M.S. *Lapwing*, which was steaming in haste to the rescue. The *Lapwing* drove the dhows on shore in Persian territory east of the mouth of the Shat el Arab, where the water was too shallow for her to follow, and when two boats were lowered to bring them off, their crews, hidden in the reeds, opened fire, and killed a British bluejacket. The boats replied, and in the end the Arabs were driven off and their vessels captured.

The disposal of the dhows gave rise to some controversy. The Turks demanded that they should be handed back to them, while the *Lapwing* expected that they should be sold, and what they fetched be distributed as prize-money. Eventually, if I remember right, the question was solved by their being taken out to sea and used as targets till they sank.

It is not easy to say what induced the Russian

Government to send a warship to Basra, unless it was in a spirit of pure mischief, for they had no interests whatever in the place. Two of their vessels, a large cruiser and a gunboat, on the way to reinforce the Far Eastern fleet, executed a hurrah cruise round the Persian Gulf, where the four funnels of which the ship boasted produced such an impression on the simple Persians that H.M.'s Government found it necessary to send a still larger ship with as many funnels to efface it. The gunboat was detached for a week to Basra, and made herself quite objectionable. It was bad enough that she should parade her flag at all in a sphere which was purely British; but her officers behaved with insufferable swank, throwing their ship open to all Turks and Arabs who cared to visit her, and openly deriding to them our poor old *Sphinx*. None of us had any illusions regarding the *Sphinx's* fighting value, and the Russian, built to look like a tiny battleship with a fighting-top and other frills, presented a much more imposing appearance; but the British felt it very much that natives should hear one of our ships thus mocked at by outsiders. Also the Russian possessed a searchlight, which none of our ships frequenting the port had, and which impressed the natives vastly. They had the insolence to turn it one night on to the verandah of Grey Mackenzie's house, where most of the community were assembled after dinner, and to keep it on for quite five minutes. But a Britisher rose to the occasion. He advanced majestically to the very centre of the beam, placed the thumb of his right hand on the tip of his nose, added the left hand to

the right, and with the fingers of both extended, stood there like Ajax defying the lightning until the Muscovites turned their light off.

Reference has been made in a previous chapter to the duties of a Consul in regard to the emancipation of slaves, which in Turkey proper were never very heavy. Judging from the number of slaves, forty or fifty, who applied to me for emancipation at Basra, the Arab is a less satisfactory master than the Turk, and their treatment left much to be desired. Neither could one reckon on no attempt being made to recapture the fugitives before the Turkish authorities, always slow to move, had furnished the certificate of Ottoman nationality which stamped them as freemen. For this reason we had to look pretty sharply after the slaves, and keep them on the premises until their papers were made out, but I had no real difficulty except in one instance. It was when an Arab potentate from the interior, Ibn Reschid of Hail, I think, came to the neighbourhood of Basra for an interview with the Vali, and four black slaves took the opportunity to bolt from his camp and take asylum at the Consulate. The town was full of armed rascals from Ibn Reschid's "army," and I received warning that the men, poor ragged wretches bearing the marks of obvious ill-treatment, would not be safe even if the Turks did the correct thing at the risk of offending a chieftain whom it was their interest to please. So to avoid complications I packed them off to Aden on a British steamer which happened to be sailing for that port.

The emancipated slaves formed quite a little

community of their own, and lived together, poor and ragged but cheerful enough. They kept up a jazz band, and on each New Year's day would serenade me with the most appalling music until paid to go away.

Basra was the last place in which a circus was to be expected, but one visited the town, and an English circus too—that is to say, that the proprietress, a German by birth, had married an Englishman in her employ. It was an unpretentious show, the proprietress, now a widow for the second time, and her two daughters doing all the equitation work, with the little assistance rendered by three or four hangers-on, who occasionally rushed into the arena to throw an inadequate somersault. The least unskilful of these tumblers was a lieut.-colonel in the Persian Army, who had attached himself to the fortunes of the circus while on its way through his fatherland, and who proved rather an embarrassing acquisition. For the Persian Consul, finding his unhallowed advances to one of the daughters repulsed and his demand for a free pass to witness the performances rejected, trumped up against the colonel a charge of desertion from the army, and wanted to arrest him. The situation was awkward, for the fact that the circus belonged to an Englishwoman by marriage did not give the British Consulate the right to interfere between the Persian Consul and one of his subjects; but Mohsin Pasha, the Vali, threw himself into the breach, and by his enlightened patronage of the entertainment frightened the Persian off.

There had been a bad earthquake lately in the

Province of Aidin, and the Pasha arranged that the circus should give a performance in aid of the victims. There was of course a charge for admission to suit the pockets of the common herd, but those who subscribed a pound or more to the good work were to have the honour of sharing the pen reserved for the Vali. Considering the rather strained relations over the Koweit question, I don't know how His Excellency felt at sitting there in state surrounded by the entire British colony, but no one else rose to the occasion. It was a deplorably poor show. Even the colonel failed twice before he could turn head-over-heels. But a farce acted in Turkish by a troupe of Armenian players which followed was really amusing, and the antics of the leading comic man equalled anything I ever saw, though some of them would hardly have passed the censor in England.

The circus broke up in Basra. The mother married the steward of a British steamer, one daughter remained to share the home of a Greek surgeon in the Turkish Army, and I never heard what became of the other.

My last two years in Basra were occupied largely with the pleasures and pains of house-building. I have mentioned that the Consulate was in a ruinous condition when handed over to the Foreign Office by the Indian Government; in fact it had been condemned already, but the point was not one likely to be laboured by a transferrer. As soon as I arrived it became the subject of indignant complaint, and I pointed out with all the vigour at my command that the Government of India had grievously erred

by passing on in so defective a condition what was impliedly a going concern. As there was no question of their being called on to supply the funds themselves, the Foreign Office took quite a lofty tone in requesting India to put matters right, and in the end a sum of £3000 was placed at my disposal for the purpose of rebuilding.

So in the winter of 1900-01 we moved into a temporary dwelling near-by, and commenced operations. Pulling down the old house was a simple enough task though a dusty and a noisy one, and provided a large quantity of material for further use. Most of the large beams were in sound enough condition to be utilised again, and thus saved a lot of expense. The new plan presented more difficulty, as there was no architect in the place capable of designing something worthy of the occasion, but members of the community called in to advise offered suggestions of more or less value, and Lynch's agent, Mr A. B. Taylor, drew up the final design.

The builder I engaged was rather a wonder. He could neither read nor write, and possessed no other instruments than a plumb-line and a stick about a yard long, which he sometimes used for measuring, but more often as a rod to flagellate the slothful. Yet he never made a miscalculation, stuck to his job like a hero, and got quite a reasonable amount of work out of his subordinates. It would perhaps be too much to assert that he was scrupulously honest, but I do not think that he exceeded the limits imposed by the custom of his profession. His weakness was a mania for building arches, which,

unless stopped, he would insert in all sorts of unnecessary places.

The materials used for construction in Basra were not first-class. Sun-dried bricks have to suffice for the needs of those with little money to spend, and even the best bricks, besides their expense, are not particularly durable, as the only fuel for burning them is supplied by reeds from the river banks where the kilns are established. Pale yellow in colour, they present rather an anæmic appearance, and are always square, instead of oblong as elsewhere. They are not known in the trade by their dimensions, such as ten-inch bricks or whatever it might be, but under high-sounding names of their own. The most lordly of all, a really stupendous brick, was called after the Nakib, the great religious gun of Basra, and a single one was as much as a boy could carry on his head.

Lime being unprocurable in the district, mud was used in place of mortar. For the sake of appearances the exterior surfaces were pointed with plaster of Paris, but mud bound the structure together, and under the circumstances it is fortunate that earthquakes do not visit Basra. As it is, all walls and pillars have to be made immensely thick to keep standing at all, and no houses are very long-lived.

A squad of boys was engaged to carry mud and bricks to the bricklayers—quite the laziest little devils it is possible to imagine. In spite of the constant attendance of a functionary corresponding to the "Shabash Wallah" of India, whose one duty it was to conduct the party from the mud depôt or the brick dump to the scene of action and to en-



HOUSE-BUILDING. THE SACRIFICE.

HOUSE-BUILDING.

courage them by entirely mendacious enconiums on their industry—though all they had to do was to carry a few pounds of mud or a couple of bricks apiece in little flat baskets poised on their heads; and though Suleiman the builder was not the man to save the rod by sparing the child,—the amount of shirking they managed to put in was really astonishing. There were few days on which I did not make an appearance to see how the building progressed, and I soon became acquainted with all the hiding-places where a boy could conceal himself, and became quite expert in routing them out. The odd thing was that they did not desert, in order to play or converse with a pal or amuse themselves in any way. It was sufficient to cower in holes or corners hugging the purely negative delight of work avoided.

When the foundations were brought level with the ground, Suleiman assured me that no blessing could be expected on the further progress of the undertaking unless a sacrifice was offered up. Accordingly I had to provide two unfortunate sheep, whose throats were duly cut, as well as a quantity of rice to be eaten with them by the builder and his chief subordinates; and I have no doubt that gluttony rather than piety prompted the suggestion. However, whether the result was due to the sacrifice or not, the building proceeded without any serious hitch or accident. Of course there were many annoying delays, particularly from the inability of brickmakers to observe their contracts, and an entire month each year was practically lost during the fast of Ramazan. Then every scrap of woodwork

not provided by the old house had to be brought up from Bombay, with vast expenditure of time and money. But the house was finished at last in the spring of 1903, and I looked on my work and saw that it was good. And then I went home on leave, and never came back to inhabit it. *Sic vos non vobis ædificatis consules.*

It served as British headquarters in the early days of the Mesopotamian expedition, and I hope gave satisfaction to an exacting staff. It is probably a Government building of some sort still, but alas! it will never again shelter a Consul.

CHAPTER X.

PERSIA.

A SERIOUS drawback to residence in Northern Persia (it is by no means the only one) is, or was, the difficulty in getting there; and when, in the autumn of 1903, I received my appointment as British Consul-General in Tabriz, the capital of the province of Azerbaijan, where the Valiahd or Crown Prince of Persia held his court, a rather long and troublesome journey lay before me. From London to Marseilles by rail, Marseilles to Batoum on the Black Sea by steamer, and thence by rail again to Erivan in the Caucasus, was easy enough travelling; but at Erivan the railway came to an abrupt termination, and from there to the Persian frontier at Julfa one had to drive a distance of about 120 miles. Fortunately for me I had found at Batoum, and about to return to his home in Tabriz, an Englishman, Mr H. F. Stevens, and we continued the journey to Julfa together.

The carriage service from Erivan was well organised, with post-houses every fifteen miles or so, where horses were changed, and where one could find sleeping accommodation of a rough-and-ready description—a plank bed, in fact, in a room liable

to be invaded at any moment by other travellers. I forget whether we stayed two or three nights on the road, but whatever it was quite sufficed.

There are two Julfas, one on each bank of the River Aras, the Araxes of the ancients, which forms the frontier between Russia and Persia. At Russian Julfa a "Mihmandar," or Receiver of Guests, was waiting for me, sent by the Valiahd to conduct the newly-arrived Consul from the frontier of his province to the capital, in accordance with established custom, and into his hands Stevens now consigned me for the remainder of the journey.

The Mihmandar, Satour Khan, was a little Armenian of mature years, enjoying the rank of general in the Persian service, though a very obvious civilian. Ages ago he had been taken to England as hanger-on to some Persian mission, which gave him occasion to pick up a slight knowledge of the language and something to talk about for the rest of his life. Polite and attentive though he was, in the course of time his descriptions of London and Brighton, both of which places I had visited myself, tended to become a source of tedium rather than entertainment.

There was then no bridge over the Aras, and one crossed on a species of ferry-boat attached to a wire-rope. When the river was low, as now, this offered a safe enough method of crossing, but in a flood the rope has been known to break and the ferry-boat to sail down the rapid river to perdition with its occupants. On the Persian side a fine, white, led horse, with gold trappings, from the Valiahd's stable was waiting, and on this I had to mount and ride a couple of hundred yards, not that

I in the least wanted to, but because precedent so demanded. This animal, having accomplished its mission, was led solemnly behind the carriage the rest of the way to Tabriz.

It being too late to make a start, we remained that night in Persian Julfa, and set out next morning, Satour Khan and I, in the Valiahd's carriage, drawn by four horses, each with his tail dyed red—the proud prerogative of the Imperial family. Progress was extremely slow, as the road could nowhere be called good, and the coachman was too wary a man to take any risks with the Valiahd's horses. Stevens soon gave us up as hopeless, and went on ahead in his light carriage, leaving me to the somewhat boring society of Satour Khan.

From Julfa to Tabriz is only eighty miles, yet we stopped four nights on the way. All arrangements were in the hands of Satour Khan, as I was the guest of the State, but I must confess to feeling a little surprised that the hospitality accorded me should have been so distinctly on the meagre side. The Mihmandar himself recognised the fact, and was profuse in apologies. He had, he said, been misled at Tabriz by lying accounts of the resources of Russian Julfa. He was told that provisions of all sorts could be obtained there in abundance; otherwise he would have laid in before starting a stock of the little luxuries which he knew from his experience of England were essential to the comfort of an Englishman. Julfa proved absolutely barren, and no one could be more sorry than himself that in consequence the commissariat was undoubtedly defective.

The matter was explained when I subsequently learned the events which preceded the despatch of a Mihmandar to meet me. It had been agreed that the mission could be carried out in a seemly manner for 250 tomans (about £50), which was in fact a reasonable sum. But there was less unanimity regarding the source from which the fund should be obtained. The Valiahd held that as he provided the carriage and horses, it was up to the merchants to find the cash. The merchants submitted with all due deference that it was not their affair at all. Eventually, in a laudable spirit of compromise, each side provided half, and 250 tomans were handed to Satour Khan to defray our expenses. From this sum he forthwith deducted 125 tomans as his "Modakhul," or commission, and thus had only the same amount left for the horses' fodder, the cost of lodging, and food for the party both going and coming—a rather tight fit.

The wearisome drive came to an end at last, and early in the afternoon of the fifth day Tabriz was in sight. It is the kindly custom of the country that residents should ride out to meet and console a new-comer, and my cavalcade soon swelled to respectable proportions as the staff of the British Consulate, members of the British and American colonies, and led horses sent by the foreign Consuls, joined up. Before entering Tabriz the road crosses the Aji Chai, or Bitter River (a title it deserves, for the water is quite undrinkable), and here an ordeal awaited me of which, fortunately, Stevens had given me warning. On the bank of the stream a large tent and a small tent were pitched, the

former for the officials and notables of the town to receive me in, and the latter to hide my blushes while I changed into uniform. It is not pleasant to sit in fancy dress and be stared at by a score or more of strange aliens while one drinks sherbet which may or may not contain a dangerous dose of typhoid germs, but it had to be endured. When refreshments had been consumed and compliments exchanged, we set out again, Satour Khan and his prisoner in the state carriage, and the rest of the suite following. The other side of the Aji River the straggling outskirts of Tabriz begin, but our destination in the Christian quarter was a couple of miles farther on. Clouds of dust raised by the procession obscured the view, but from time to time I caught sight of small shops, squalid mud houses, and groups of inhabitants collected to gaze at the circus. At the entrance to the town proper we were joined by a score of Persian farashes on foot, clad in black, who marched two and two sedately in front of us, giving quite a funereal appearance to the cortège. Just when I was beginning to abandon all hope of ever arriving, the carriage drew up before a gateway in a narrow street, and from the royal arms over it I recognised that this must be the British Consulate, and that the tedious journey was finished. Not that I was yet free to change and wash the dust off my person: Satour Khan and those of the notables who had remained faithful to the last (for some had tactfully dropped out before this) had to be invited in to partake of refreshments, and another hour passed before they left me to myself.

It is not to be supposed that because £50 were provided to defray the expense of my journey from the frontier, I myself escaped scot-free. This was far from being the case. Coachman, grooms, servants, farashes, and in fact every one with the slightest claim to recognition had to receive an appropriate acknowledgment, not excepting General Satour Khan, to whom not less than £10 could be offered; and the total disbursements for largesse came to between £40 and £50. On subsequent occasions the same trip, made unofficially, cost about a quarter of this sum, all expenses included.

Tabriz was an exception to the general rule of the Consular Service in that an official residence was provided, so I was spared the trouble of house-hunting. Scores of years ago this had been the summer resort of the British Legation in Teheran, which, in days of greater independence and leisure, had been wont to migrate there bodily in order to escape the heat of the capital. It was a large and rambling place built round three separate court-yards, with stabling for a dozen horses and accommodation for nearly twice that number of humans, and though over a hundred years old—a considerable age for a house in Persia—was still perfectly habitable. The main court was more than sufficient for my own use and the offices, and the rest of the building remained shut up until an escort of six Indian cavalrymen was attached to the Consulate as a counterpoise to the Cossacks at the Russian Consulate, and even then after quarters were assigned to them there were several rooms to spare.

My first duty after arrival was to present myself to the Valiahd. A curious point about the ceremonial observed on this occasion was that I was expected to keep my cocked hat on during the audience. The custom of the Persians, as of other Moslems, is never to uncover the head except in domestic privacy, and to this habit the foreign Consul on a first visit to the Valiahd had to conform. On subsequent occasions one was free to follow the European instinct and bare the head when indoors. Another Persian habit, that of taking off the boots when entering a house, had before this led to a serious difference between the foreign representatives at Teheran and the Shah. His Imperial Majesty was of opinion that they should not only wear their hats when received in audience, but should also appear in their stockinged feet. The diplomats, while willing to keep their hats on to please the Shah, clung passionately to their boots. In the end it was agreed that they should arrive with galoshes over their boots, and shed these on entering the palace, thus satisfying the prejudices of both parties to the controversy. It is in such ingenious compromises that diplomacy excels, and justifies the high salaries paid to its exponents.

The personality of the Valiahd was not impressive. A short square figure already inclining to obesity, a heavy, not to say sullen, expression, and a shy awkward manner were disadvantageous, unredeemed by any compensating qualities either of head or heart. Up to this time there had been no circumstances in the province he administered really to test his capacities as governor, but he

had already managed to acquire the reputation of being cruel and grasping, and was decidedly unpopular among his subjects. On almost every occasion on which we met he seemed so ill at ease that there could be little pleasure in the interview, and this was particularly the case when I made my bow for the first time. It was a relief to get it over, and no doubt the Valiahd was just as pleased to be rid of me.

The Consular body had next to be called upon: no very arduous task, since there were only a Russian Consul-General and French and Turkish Consuls besides myself. The Russian, Pokhitonow, was an older man than the rest of us, had been long in Persia, and was thoroughly imbued with the principles and prejudices of the old Russian régime. Regarding Azerbaijan as an offshot of the Caucasus and almost a Russian province, he found it hard to tolerate the claims of other Powers to be on an equality there with Russia.

It took some time to get accustomed to the presence of a Turkish Consul, as there were of course none in the Ottoman Empire where my lines had hitherto been laid. There was nothing especially noticeable about the two who were posted to Tabriz in my time. They were correct presentable persons, who, though Mussulmans in a Mussulman country, considered themselves just as much foreigners as the rest of us, and associated with the Europeans in preference to the native community. One of the two brought his wife to Tabriz, and gave a great shock to native ideas of etiquette by allowing her to accompany him for walks. She was always

veiled, but a good Moslem had no business to appear out-of-doors with his spouse like a shameless Christian.

The foreign community was fairly large for so out of the way a place, the Russian and Turkish naturally the most numerous elements. A large French Catholic establishment furnished a considerable contingent of priests and sisters of charity, while French science was represented by the Valiahd's doctor and veterinary surgeon, besides a chemist and a school teacher or two. The American colony consisted entirely of missionaries with their families and teachers belonging to the mission schools, who, in the absence of a United States Consul, were as usual under British protection. Then there were a compact little body of Belgians lent by their Government to manage the Persian customs. A small sprinkling of Italians and Greeks, and a few Swiss in the employ of a Manchester firm, made up the tale of foreigners.

The British colony, small but select, comprised the higher officials of the Imperial Bank of Persia, the staff of the Indo-European Telegraph Office, the Stevens family, and my old Erzeroum friend Dr Aslanian, who had fled from Turkey in search of the tranquility which Asia-Minor refused him, and which, as the event proved, he was not for very long to enjoy in Persia. The Imperial Bank furnished two and sometimes three Englishmen, as did the Telegraph, but these went and came in the natural course of their business, and the permanent mainstay of the community was Stevens. As a rule the British merchant in these remote places bears a high reputation, and it is on him as much as on

anything that our prestige rests ; but I have never met one more esteemed and trusted by the natives than was Stevens. When the Consul was absent, he or his son Charles was always put in charge of the Consulate, and eighteen months after my arrival the latter was appointed honorary Vice-Consul, so that there might be some one to carry on when I was called, as frequently happened, to other parts of the province.

Nobody had any exact idea regarding the population of Tabriz, as no census had ever been taken. Patriotic Persians, wishing to impress one with the importance of the town, estimated it as high as half a million, obviously a wild exaggeration ; but the general estimate was something over two hundred thousand. The place certainly covered an enormous extent of ground, as the great majority of the houses had only one storey ; most were built round a courtyard, and many boasted of gardens. Squares and open spaces were numerous, while before the town ended extensive orchards planted with almond and apricot trees began. A European town covering the same area would probably contain more than double the population. Such streets as had any pavement at all were paved with cobble-stones, but for the most part the native mud prevailed, and this in dry weather crumbled into a very penetrating dust. Apart from the extensive bazars, which were the pride of Tabriz, the streets generally presented a doleful appearance, with blank walls on either side, and no windows opening on them, lest the indelicate passer-by might peep through them into women's apartments.

For two or three weeks in the spring, when the fruit-trees were in blossom and the orchards gay with pink and white flowers, Tabriz looked almost pretty, but for the rest of the year it was just the ordinary drab Oriental city lying in an arid plain and half-surrounded with still more arid mountains. The one outstanding landmark which the town possessed was the Ark, or citadel, a square brick edifice of imposing height and bulk, but rapidly falling into ruin and no longer possessing any military importance, except as an arsenal and storehouse. From the top of the Ark it had been customary to hurl to the ground women whose conduct called for public reprobation, but such an execution had not taken place for several years past. According to a tradition current in the town, an erring lady once thus precipitated from aloft was preserved by her voluminous garments, which acted as a parachute and enabled her to plane down triumphantly to the ground.

Although Tabriz is the second town in Persia as regards population and the first in commercial importance, the Persian language is not spoken there. The Mongol conquerors of the fourteenth century imposed their tongue on the north of Persia, and from Erivan nearly to Kazvin the language of the Mussulmans is still a Turkish or Tartar dialect. Persian remains the official language in Azerbaijan and the only one which is written, but the natives of the province speak Turkish as their mother tongue. Any one who goes to school—a small minority—learns Persian, but he learns it as a foreign language.

The Azerbaijanee differs from the genuine Persian

almost as much in character as he does in language. Persians may be deficient in all the moral qualities which the European is taught to respect, but they are light-hearted and humorous, polite, hospitable, and amiable in their private relations. The Persian Turk, on the contrary, is distinguished by a sullen dourness which renders him altogether unattractive. His bigotry in matters of religion is proverbial. He objects on principle to foreigners and Christians of all sorts, will refuse to partake of food prepared by them, or even to drink out of a glass which has been used by a Christian. It was until recently the custom to drive all the Armenians out of the Tabriz bazars in wet weather lest moisture from their garments should contaminate good Moslems, who might accidentally rub shoulders with them.

Arriving as I did in October, hardly a month of fine weather remained before the snow fell. Tabriz stands between four and five thousand feet above sea-level, and, barring Erzeroum, is the coldest place I have known. The snow lies from November until April, and between these months the thermometer is constantly below freezing-point and often below zero. But the climate, though severe, is healthy and invigorating both in winter and summer, and it was on account of its reputation for salubrity that Zobeideh, the skittish wife of Haroun er Raschid, whose pranks we read of in the 'Arabian Nights,' selected Tabriz as her summer refuge from the heat of Bagdad.

The personnel of the British Consulate-General was perhaps on a larger scale than the work of the post required, but in Persia a man's importance is

reckoned by the number of his hangers-on, and a Consul has to conform to local custom or lose consideration. We had three Mirzas, or secretaries, corresponding to Dragomans in Turkey. Then there were two Ghulams, who performed the functions of the Turkish Cavass, with the difference that they were mounted. The senior of the two held the rank of lieutenant in the Persian Army, and in private life was a corn-merchant. Besides my escort of Sowars, it was the custom of the Persian Government to detail Topjis (artillerymen) to guard foreign Consulates, and I had four of these unfortunates established in the lodge at the entrance to the house, where they drank tea from morning to night, and aided the Ghulams to usher in visitors. Elderly, poorly clothed, and half-starved, they thought themselves lucky to receive the subsidy of three tomans per month which the Consulate paid them. By the time their army pay had filtered through the hands of their colonel and his paymaster, it is improbable that enough remained to defray their libations of tea, though tea was cheap enough.

Military life in Persia was a hard one, and the rule seemed to be, once a soldier always a soldier. I have noticed at a review grey-beards of sixty or seventy marching side by side with boys of fifteen, all looking equally miserable and incompetent. Not that these warriors do not at times show themselves men of resource. When Viscount Downe was sent to Teheran in 1903 with a mission to invest Muzaffer ed Din Shah with the Garter, he had occasion one day to call on the Minister for

War, but omitted to send beforehand the customary notice of his intention. No one expected him, and he found at the door one solitary Topji, a soldier of some experience, who knew that it was up to him to present arms to so distinguished a visitor. Unfortunately he had no weapon of any sort or kind, but, nothing daunted, he rushed indoors, picked up the leg of a table (there is no lack of broken furniture in a Persian house), and gallantly presented this at the admiring colonel of the 10th Hussars.

It was fortunate that few questions between British subjects and natives arose in Tabriz, for the machinery for settling them was of the roughest. In this respect there is a considerable difference between the conditions prevailing in Turkey and Persia. In Turkey you have abundance of excellent laws; the difficulty is to get them applied. In Persia there are no laws at all worth speaking of. In case of a dispute between a foreigner and a native, which the parties are unable to settle alone, the Karguzar—representative of the Persian Foreign Office—and the Consul had to meet and fight the matter out. Our Karguzar was quite a civilised person, albeit corrupt; and though entirely devoted to Russian interests desired intensely to become one day Persian Minister to Great Britain. The ambition was never realised, but it made him anxious to be on good terms with British officials, and as he was by nature friendly and obliging, we got on very well.

Foreigners were under the jurisdiction of their Consuls. An Order in Council existed for the discipline of British subjects, but so exemplary was the

conduct of our little community that it never had to be invoked.

Much of the work of the Consulate arose from the rivalry between Great Britain and Russia in Persia. Whatever move the one Power made, the other at once did its best to counter. The British and Russian Legations in Teheran watched one another's doings with extreme jealousy, and the Consuls throughout the country imitated their leaders to the best of their ability. So far as Azerbaijan was concerned, we were sadly handicapped, and it was particularly unfortunate that the future Shah should reside in a province whose frontier marched with that of Russia and where the outward and visible signs of Russian power were manifest at his very door, whereas it was a far cry to the Persian Gulf, where alone Great Britain could bring effective pressure to bear. I do not suppose that the Valiahd had any real affection for Russia, but he was certainly more in awe of her than he was of us, and I could never feel much confidence in his protestations that, when Shah, his one object would be to hold the balance even between the two rivals.

If Tabriz itself was placid enough for the time being, outlying portions of my district soon provided a certain amount of excitement. In March 1904 Mr Labaree of the American Mission at Urmia was brutally murdered while returning from Khoi after escorting a lady member of the Mission part of her way home. Majd es Sultaneh, the Persian official in charge of that part of the frontier, investigated the case with much more energy and intelligence than can usually be expected, and obtained

fairly conclusive proof that the perpetrators of the crime were a half-demented and wholly blackguard descendant of the Prophet, Seyid Gafar by name, and certain leading men of the Begzadeh clan of Kurds living in Dasht, some fifteen miles south-west of Urmia. The Seyid had a grudge against the missionaries, who had been the cause that we had demanded his arrest on account of the murder by him during the winter of a Nestorian, naturalised in Canada; and though the efforts of the Persian authorities to capture him had been of the most languid description, the poor fellow had undoubtedly been put to a certain amount of inconvenience thereby, and in the end had taken up his abode with the Kurds. These gentlemen had also reason to be dissatisfied with the missionaries. In the summer of 1903 a dispute arose between them and some neighbouring Christian villages over grazing rights, in the course of which they had occasion to burn a couple of villages and kill half a score or so of men, finally laying siege to the large and populous village of Mawana, not more than ten miles from the town itself. Before they could take it, the missionaries got in an appeal to Stevens, then in charge of the Consulate at Tabriz, and through his efforts the Valiahd sent a force to raise the siege, and the Kurds had to withdraw with their predatory instincts only partially satisfied.

There was also reason to believe that the chief Mujtehid of Urmia, Mirza Hussein Agha, who objected strongly to missionaries on religious grounds, had been so far implicated in the affair that he had kept the Kurds advised of Mr Labaree's move-

ments, and so enabled them to lay a successful ambush for him.

When the incident was reported to Teheran the British and American Legations at once clamoured for the arrest of the criminals, but without any immediate result, except that the Kurds got uneasy, and requested Seyid Gafar to remove himself elsewhere. He accordingly roamed about the district, giving out that he would kill at sight any missionary he might meet. This and the hostile attitude of the Kurds rendered it dangerous for the missionaries to go about their business outside the town, and inspired them with natural apprehensions. Accordingly early in May I was sent to Urmia to afford them what comfort my presence could inspire, and at the same time to encourage the local authorities to greater activity.

Urmia is about eighty miles from Tabriz as the crow flies, but the lake of that ilk intervenes, and makes the journey round nearly double the distance. It took me five days in a carriage to get there, and I was glad enough to reach the English mission. In this hospitable abode I was destined to pass five months on this my first visit, and two years in all, almost as long as in my own home.

It was not very difficult to convince the Governor, Haji Nizam ed Dowleh, a fat and futile functionary of middle age, that the time for action had arrived, and that in his own interest he must do something. Within a couple of weeks he was able to announce with pardonable elation that he had caught Seyid Gafar. At the same time he delicately congratulated me that, my mission now being accomplished,

I could return to Tabriz. Great was his disappointment that I was unable to act on this hint, and had to inform him that we regarded the Seyid's Kurdish accomplices as even more worthy of punishment than himself, and that I should have to remain in Urmia until they were suitably dealt with.

For the moment it remained to make sure that some ordinary criminal was not being foisted on us in place of the Seyid, as this was a ruse which would at once suggest itself to any experienced Persian official. He was therefore produced before me, heavily manacled, a not very impressive figure, and with nothing particularly villainous in his appearance, and I duly identified him by a scar he was known to have on his hand. In due course they forwarded him to Teheran, and condemned him to imprisonment for life, for it would have been too much to expect the Government to incur the odium involved in the execution of a Seyid. Anyhow it did not much matter, for he died in prison after a year or two.

The punishment of the Begzadehs presented a much more difficult problem. The tribe could put several hundred armed men into the field; there was no knowing what other tribes might join in if they were attacked, and their lair was only a step from the Turkish frontier. It is no wonder that the Persian Government hesitated to send an expensive expedition to chastise them before exhausting its usual methods of cajolery and treachery. Meanwhile I stayed on, hoping rather against hope that the Kurds would eventually meet with their deserts and rather enjoying the change of surroundings.



KURDISH LADIES.

Urmia was a town of between twenty and thirty thousand inhabitants, lying in the centre of the most populous and fertile district of Persia, and but for Kurds and fever would have been as nice a place of residence as any in the Shah's dominions. I have said that the English missionaries put me up. There were three of them then resident in the place —the Rev. O. H. Parry, head of the Mission; the Rev. — Bowden; and a lay brother, A. Longden, a candidate for holy orders in the future, but for the present acting as Bursar and general utility man. Two other padres resided in Van on the Turkish side.

They had a large establishment, containing quarters for more than the existing staff; a chapel; a boys' school; a house for the Rev. Mr Neesan, the native member of the Mission, who was in priest's orders of the American Episcopalian Church; a printing-press; and other appurtenances—the whole built round a plot of ground, half-garden and half-yard, the centre of which was occupied by a group of mulberry trees producing the best mulberries I ever tasted. The Mission was the private affair of the Archbishop of Canterbury, and originally instituted by Archbishop Benson in 1886 in response to an appeal for help from the then Patriarch of the Nestorians. His Church was at the time in a bad way, its clergy, even the bishops, poor, ignorant, and ill-equipped to withstand the proselytising zeal of the American Presbyterians on the one side and the French Catholics on the other; and the object of the English Mission was to come to its aid by educating young men for the priesthood

and others to become in their turn teachers of their countrymen. It confined itself strictly to the original intention of helping them to help themselves, did not attempt to proselytise, and in general showed a very sporting and broad-minded spirit.

At a rough estimate there were thirty thousand Nestorians on the Persian side of the frontier and a hundred thousand in Turkey. Why this insignificant community should offer such an extraordinary attraction to the missionary instinct of other countries is beyond my powers of explanation; nor does it seem sound business to devote, to what was after all a Christian creed, energy and money which otherwise directed might have converted heathen to Christianity; but the fact remains that there were enough missionaries chasing the souls of a hundred odd thousands of heretical Nestorians to minister to the spiritual needs of many millions of the heathen.

The two oldest Missions were the American and the French, who had by now established largish communities of Presbyterians and Papists respectively. The Russian Mission was of more recent date. On its first appearance large numbers of the adherents of the old Nestorian Church had turned Orthodox in the hope of obtaining political protection, but as this was not forthcoming to any great extent, because for some reason or other the Russian Government declined to extend its patronage to the Mission, they were fast dribbling away again, and for the time being the Russian missionaries devoted their energies to quarrelling amongst themselves more than to religious propaganda.

In addition to these four principal Missions, free-

lances abounded, mostly Nestorians themselves, who, after acquiring sufficient education in one or other of the foreign schools to impose on the credulous, had succeeded in finding backers in the United States or elsewhere, but mostly in the United States, to supply them with funds for so-called Missions in the country. A common procedure was for these gentlemen, after collecting as much money as they could for the establishment of a Mission, or hospital, or orphanage, as the case might be, to return to Urmia or its neighbourhood, and there build themselves a house with the proceeds to live comfortably therein for the rest of their lives. The saving of souls, the care of the sick, or the maintenance of orphans were entirely secondary considerations, and often quite lost sight of. One of them was actually living on the proceeds of a collection he had made in America for the victims of atrocities in Macedonia, a country he had never even visited. There were no less than four of such Baptist "missionaries," each maintained by separate Baptist congregations in the States, and working (?) entirely independently of one another.

I remember remarking on my first visit that I could not mention offhand any denomination which was unrepresented in Urmia except the Mormons; but sure enough when I passed through again in 1914 I found three Mormon elders doing their best to propagate the creed of Joseph Smith in the district. I can hardly believe that their purpose was to whip in recruits for the harems of Salt Lake City amongst the perhaps interesting but assuredly not attractive Nestorian ladies.

Perhaps the most ingenious of these Nestorian adventurers was one who, under the *nom de guerre* of "Dr Day," victimised our fellow-subjects in British Columbia to a scandalous extent. Heaven only knows how he had drifted into that part of the world, but on the strength of his Doctor of Divinity degree (conferred by himself) he was greeted with open arms by religious circles there. Being a clever fellow, he soon came to the conclusion that the crying need of British Columbia was for domestic servants, and he announced to his friends that this was a need none could supply better than himself from his orphanage in Urmia. Only any one wanting a maid must come down first with the cost of her journey from Urmia to the Pacific coast—no inconsiderable sum. Many rose to the bait, and he retired to Urmia with some thousands of dollars in his pocket.

Needless to say, the orphanage did not exist, and nothing more was heard of "Dr Day." The bitter wail of the defrauded Columbians was passed on to me by their police, but, sad to say, my efforts to put salt on the tail of "Dr Day" proved unavailing, for he was a Turkish subject, and the Persian authorities could not touch him.

On my arrival in the English Mission the governor was so kind as to station four Persian soldiers at the gate as a protection. The guard of course received a small gratuity for their services, and, presumably in order to allow as many as possible to benefit thereby, were changed every twenty-four hours. As the governor's resources only allowed him to provide four sets of uniform in fair repair, the out-

goers had to strip before the incomers could be suitably garbed—a novel and interesting military ceremony. Before long these were replaced by four Sikh sowars detached from the British Legation in Teheran, who remained until I returned to Tabriz.

Even with a reliable escort it was not considered prudent to go any distance from the town and off the beaten track so long as our feud with the Kurds lasted, and time was apt to hang rather heavy on the hands of an idler in the seclusion of the English Mission, where everybody else had his regular occupation.

CHAPTER XI.

PERSIA—*continued.*

In October, the Labaree case having meanwhile made no further progress, I had to return hurriedly to Tabriz to meet Sir Arthur Hardinge, the British Minister, who was passing through on his way to England. He stayed a fortnight, but his visit was spoiled by a terrible outbreak of cholera. As soon as matters began to look serious, the Valiahd and his court naturally bolted to a retreat in the country some distance away, which was highly inconvenient, as the Minister had important matters to discuss with His Imperial Highness.

Registration of deaths or births was unknown in Persia, but by keeping a rough score of the number of interments it was reckoned that between eight and ten thousand persons died in the town through this visitation. Foreigners, by taking reasonable precautions, escaped almost scot-free. A French Sister of Charity died, and a child fell sick but recovered. These were the only foreign cases. The natives took no measures at all against the disease. It was sent by Allah, and had to be accepted with resignation as a divine dispensation, and in consequence they died like flies. The system of water-

supply in Tabriz was a terrible handicap, consisting of rivulets running down from the hills behind through the various courtyards or gardens. On the premises of one family they might be washing a cholera corpse in the stream from which a whole series of houses lower down took their drinking-water, and no better plan for broadcasting cholera germs could have been conceived.

The epidemic spread to the rest of Azerbaijan, and Urmia suffered severely. Here again the Christians were less affected than the Moslems, as the missionaries of all categories saw to it that they behaved prudently. The contrast did not fail to strike the Moslems, who complained to their Mollahs that Allah should have sent this disaster in the sacred month of Ramazan, and that they themselves died while infidels were comparatively immune. The clerics were ready with an ingenious explanation to the effect that a wall in Paradise had fallen into ruin, and that a large number of the Faithful were required in haste to execute repairs.

Ignorant and narrow-minded as these Moslem ecclesiastics generally are, they at times show a ready wit. There was a Kurdish sheikh, quite a holy man, at Nochea to whom one of his parishioners brought a cock, declaring that three several times in his presence it had proclaimed with human voice that "The true religion is the religion of Jesus." The sheikh did not lose his head before so embarrassing a situation, but told the man he would take the night to think over the matter. Next day he delivered his judgment, which was to the effect

that the bird was plainly inspired, and must be delivered to him to be kept for the rest of its days in luxury; but that no action need be taken in the matter of its declaration, as there were so many different Christian religions about, and it had omitted to mention which particular one was meant.

I wonder if the Archbishop of Canterbury would get out of his difficulty so neatly if some profane rooster in Lambeth took on itself to announce that "There is no God but Allah, and Mohammed is his Prophet."

After an absence on leave, which lasted from November to February, I returned in the latter month to find the American Consul at Kharput, Dr Norton, installed in my house. He had been at Urmia in January to settle the Labaree affair, but without any apparent result so far as punishing the Kurds went. The American Legation at this time appeared to concentrate on obtaining pecuniary compensation for the murdered missionary's widow, and in the end a large sum was extracted from the Persian Government, and after several refusals eventually accepted under pressure by the poor lady, who had no idea of making money out of her loss. Dr Norton remained with me a week or two, and then returned to his post in Turkey.

The two Legations at Teheran continued to exercise pressure on the Persian Government, which finally produced two gratifying results. First, Mirza Hussein Agha, the objectionable Urmia Mujtehid, was exiled to Tabriz, and kept there for some time. He was only allowed to return after he had come

to me to apologise for past misdeeds, and promise amendment for the future. This was fairly derogatory for an arrogant ecclesiastic, but on reaching Urmia he had to call on the English Mission, and, I believe, kissed Parry's hand—a supreme humiliation which he only survived a month or so.

About the same time Government emissaries cajoled three of the leading chiefs among the Begzadeh Kurds into paying a visit to Teheran. Whatever the terms on which they went—and they must have received pretty comprehensive assurances of immunity,—their absence from Urmia, and the fact that the Government now had hostages in its hands, put the rest of the tribe on its good behaviour, and Urmia was untroubled by them for the rest of the summer.

Before the Labaree case was finally allowed to drop, it caused me to travel by carriage or on horseback over five hundred miles, and to remain absent from my own house for nearly a year, besides costing the taxpayer about £1500; but I think that the greatest inconvenience of all, so far as I was personally affected, arose when Majd es Sultaneh took asylum in the British Consulate.

It will generally be found that in autocratic countries where the small man has no legal rights to speak of, some custom grows up to mitigate to a slight extent his painful situation. In Persia the system of "Bast," or asylum, was the only means whereby the oppressed could do something to right, or at least to call public attention to, his grievances. Of course "Bast" was taken with some one of higher rank or more influence than the

taker; sometimes, in extreme cases, with the oppressor himself, who was thus put on his honour, so to speak, to modify his course of conduct. A foreign Consulate was an admirable place of asylum if you could get in, or the house of any foreigner. The offices of the Indo-European Telegraph Company were favourite resorts, and simple-minded people have been known in an emergency to embrace a telegraph-pole under the mistaken impression that they found asylum by doing so. The refusal of "Bast" to any one with a legitimate grievance would be an affront to public opinion, which rarely happened.

When the Labaree indemnity was mooted, it was intimated to the Valiahd that he would be expected to reimburse the Teheran Government by collecting the amount locally. This peeved him considerably, and looking about for a scapegoat he found one in the person of Majd es Sultaneh. The over-zealous functionary was summoned to Tabriz and introduced to the presence of the Valiahd, who explained to him that his proper course would have been, when the murder of Mr Labaree was reported, to catch the first beggar he could find roaming about the country and bring his head in as that of the assassin, thus avoiding all the trouble which ensued. To point the moral he boxed the culprit's ears, fined him £1000, and dismissed him with the assurance that this was only a modest instalment of what was reserved for him.

Majd, fearing with reason for his property and possibly his life, concluded that he had better take "Bast" in the British Consulate. It was out of

the question to refuse him, for all his trouble arose from zeal over an American affair, and, as in the public eye Britishers and Americans were one, our prestige would have suffered enormously by the abandonment of a friend in his need. Accordingly he was installed as a guest in the Consulate, being perfectly safe while on my premises, but had he ventured out he would by the rules of the game have become lawful prize to the Valiahd.

Obviously this was not a situation to be prolonged indefinitely, for even a well-mannered and unobtrusive guest, as my luckless Basti proved to be, could not fail to become something of an incubus in the long-run. What he himself suggested was to get permission to leave Persia and settle in Tiflis, while putting his landed property in the district of Urmia out of the reach of the Valiahd. The second desideratum could be attained by a fictitious transfer of the property to a British subject—say, Stevens, —provided the approval and support of the British Minister were obtained. Sir Arthur Hardinge, from whom and his successors in my time a Consul could always rely on sympathy and support when in a hole, at once consented, and the transfer to Stevens' name was carried through without much trouble. To get its owner out of the country was not so easy. Doubtless we could have escorted him to the Russian frontier without much fear of interference, but there was always a slight risk, and besides, under the circumstances it was his due to leave with honour and not to make a furtive exit.

As the origin of his difficulties was a purely American affair, I naturally enough expected the American

Minister to help him out of them. But the reply to my request for aid was a curt refusal, on the ground that he made it a rule to refrain from interference in the internal affairs of the country! However, the British Legation continued to peg away, and in the end Majd left for Tiflis, not only with the Shah's permission but the proud recipient of a robe of honour.

This incident might have rendered relations with the Valiahd rather uncomfortable for a time, but luckily he quitted Tabriz almost immediately. His father, Muzaffer ed din Shah ("Mauvaise affaire ed din," as the Parisians aptly nicknamed him), was off to enjoy, as far as his empty pockets and played-out condition allowed, what proved to be his last fling in Europe, and the Heir-Apparent was summoned to Teheran to act as Regent in his absence. Nizam es Sultaneh, an experienced official, came to take the Valiahd's place as governor of Azerbaijan, a very shrewd old gentleman and pleasant to deal with. He was accompanied by his son Hussein, who had been educated at Harrow, and appeared to be about twenty years of age. He had acquired at school excellent manners, a first-rate knowledge of English, a cultured intonation, and a fair stock of British expletives, but hardly the experience to qualify him for the post of Chief of the Merchants, to which his fond father appointed him, and which was a pretty lucrative job. I found him a likeable youth, and was glad to let him frequent my house, for, like most Orientals who have been educated abroad, it was hard for him to sink back at once into the native way of living.

The Valiadh's departure was so great a relief to the population in general that everything went swimmingly under Nizam es Sultaneh's administration.

One rather exciting episode did occur in connection with Jaffer Agha, chief of the Kurds of Chari, a district of Salmas, about fifty miles north-west of Urmia. He had been contumacious towards the Government, and resisted a small expedition sent to punish him for his misdeeds, which were many, but recently found it expedient to offer his submission. He was thereupon invited to come to Tabriz to cement the reconciliation under a solemn safe-conduct, and he made his appearance during this summer, accompanied by sixteen retainers. For two or three weeks he was hospitably entertained, and all went merry as a marriage-bell until the day came when he was to bid his official farewell to Nizam es Sultaneh. I was sitting quietly at home late in the afternoon of this day when I heard a burst of rifle-fire from the direction of the Government House, followed by a series of shots, which continued for ten minutes or a quarter of an hour, and then gradually died away in the distance. This was an unusual phenomenon for Tabriz, where ammunition was expensive, but the explanation was forthcoming next day. It transpired that Nizam es Sultaneh and the higher officials assembled in the reception-room on the first floor to receive the farewell greetings of Jaffer Agha, and that the latter was introduced alone into the anteroom and told to wait a moment. To him appeared an officer told off for the purpose, who discharged a revolver

into the chieftain's body, while others performed the same kind office for two of his bodyguard who remained outside in the corridor. The three corpses were then thrown down into the court below. Thus far all had gone according to plan, but at this point a serious hitch occurred in the programme. It had been arranged that as soon as the shots were fired upstairs a company of soldiers concealed on the premises should sally forth and deal with the fourteen other retainers of Jaffer Agha who remained downstairs; but unfortunately when the critical moment arrived the soldiers deemed themselves safer where they were, and declined to budge. Consequently the Kurds were free to act as they pleased. They began by firing several volleys up through the windows of the room where the authorities sat in conclave, causing these to grovel panic-stricken on the floor out of the way of the bullets. They then mounted their horses and rode through the streets, firing at any one they met, and so reached the open country. No one ventured to bar their way, and they arrived at their home, a hundred miles away, entirely unmolested.

The authorities made as much capital as they could out of the three corpses, having them dragged in triumph through the streets and then hung by the heels, like carcases in a butcher's shop, from a first-floor balcony overlooking a public square. But the honours lay with the Kurds, who had killed or wounded seventeen unoffensive townspeople as a set-off against their own three casualties, and there was some grumbling in Tabriz over the way in which the affair had been bungled.



JAFFER AGHA IN LIFE.

THE END OF JAFFER AGHA.

The horrible treachery of the thing provoked little or no criticism. It was the time-honoured way of dealing with Kurds, and, in view of the impotence of the Government, practically the only way. The folly of the Kurds in letting themselves be entrapped time after time in this manner is almost unbelievable, but they never seemed to gain wisdom from experience.

The classic example of Kurdish stupidity and Persian treachery was provided by another, Nizam es Sultaneh, who, being unable to catch a Kurd chief, induced him to come in by swearing publicly on the Koran that so long as he, Nizam, was above ground, no harm whatever should happen to the Kurd. When the latter surrendered, the ingenious governor had a deep hole dug in his tent, and ensconced himself in it. Being no longer above ground and so keeping the letter of his oath, he ordered the Kurd's execution without compunction.

In September, the Valiahd being still at Teheran, instructions unexpectedly came for me to proceed to Urmia again. By arrangement between the Legations and the Government, the Begzadeh chiefs (hostages, prisoners, or guests—I never quite understood in what capacity they visited Teheran) were to be sent down at once in charge of a Persian official, Bagher Khan, and he and I were to act as joint-commissioners to investigate the circumstances of the murder and decide as to the guilt or innocence of the tribe. Exactly what our powers were to be was not stated, and the whole scheme was rather vague, but as matters turned out this was of no importance.

Less time would have been wasted if I had waited for Bagher Khan to reach Tabriz, but as I had no desire to travel with the Kurds and was assured that he was leaving Teheran immediately, I started as soon as preparations could be made.

The Archbishop of Canterbury's Mission again opened its hospitable doors to me, and I sat down to wait patiently until Bagher Khan should arrive with his Kurds. As a matter of fact, he had not started from Teheran when I reached Urmia, and when he did turn up I had already been there a month. And he came minus the Kurds. I called on him the day after his arrival, and naturally my first question was about them. He replied that it was quite all right, that on the road a few miles from Urmia they had petitioned for leave to branch off to their villages just to greet their families, and that he had seen no objection to their doing so, as they promised faithfully to come in next day to stand their trial.

I do not for a moment suppose that Bagher Khan, who in appearance and character resembled nothing so much as an aged sheep, would have ventured to let his charges escape on his own initiative, however much they made it worth his while to do so. The *dénoûment* was certainly planned beforehand from Teheran.

Of course we never saw the Kurds again. For weeks Bagher Khan went about bleating that such excellent fellows would certainly keep their word and surrender. Message after message was sent to them, but still they came not. Before long the American missionaries got tired of a situation

seriously obstructing their activities, and were anxious to find a solution which would end it. Their unofficial negotiations with the Kurds resulted in a request from the latter to be informed, without prejudice, what would be done to Mr Labaree's murderers should they be given up. The question was referred to the American Minister, who replied pompously that nothing short of death would be their lot. After this no more was heard of a settlement by consent.

Meanwhile I kicked my heels in the English Mission, where Parry still remained, while Bowden had migrated to Van, and Longden's place as Bursar had been taken by G. S. Reed. Rough medical attendance was expected by the flock from the Mission, and it was usually the Bursar who specialised in this subject. Consequently Reed's time was largely taken up in preparing sulphur ointment and doses of santonin, itch and worms being the minor complaints from which Nestorians chiefly suffer. Indeed, one old dame who came for relief, on hearing the usual preliminary query, "Have you got worms?" replied indignantly with another question, "Hasn't everybody got worms?"

There was a Nestorian bishop, Mar (Lord) Dinka, who had got into trouble in his diocese, and so became a permanent hanger-on of the Mission. He could not read or write, but knew all his church services by heart. As a weapon of offence he possessed an Episcopal seal, which, for a consideration, he would append to decrees of divorce. When the frequency of his divorces tended to become a public scandal, Parry impounded the seal and locked it

up. All went well for a time, but after a bit divorces again became the order of the day. The bishop had managed to get another seal made. For this offence he was deprived of his usual Christmas present of a pound of coffee. Parry is now a bishop himself, and it is to be hoped that he regrets his intolerance of the pastimes of a brother prelate. Poor Lord Dinka! he was massacred during the Great War along with so many others of his race.

In some countries the missionary is not regarded with much affection outside his own particular flock, and may indeed be the object of particular aversion amongst the stalwarts of the creed he is doing his best to upset. The archbishop's Mission to the Nestorians enjoyed a peculiarly favourable position in this respect, for they were there by invitation, not as intruders; they abstained scrupulously from propaganda of their own tenets, and they were under the especial protection of the Nestorian Patriarch. Wherever they went amongst the Nestorians they were received with the deepest respect, and were generally called "Apostles." After bossing archbishops and bishops, it must have been rather a come-down for them when they returned to England and reverted to comparatively humble spheres in the Church at home.

This veneration for their office once led to a rather embarrassing incident. Two of them while engaged in a tour of visitation amongst the mountain communities reached a little village rather in advance of their scheduled time. As they were not expected before the afternoon, the men of the place had all gone out and left the village free for the ladies to

take their quarterly hot bath, which they were enjoying in tubs placed before each one's door in the street. Suddenly the two Englishmen came into sight a couple of hundred yards away. The bathers were in a sad predicament. There was not time to put on clothes, and the choice lay between violating their natural modesty or withholding from the "Apostles" the customary marks of respect due to such.

A hurried consultation resulted in the affirmation of the principle of "duty before decency" laid down by the boatswain in Captain Marryat's story; and as the horsemen trotted up, a dozen shamefaced Naiads emerged dripping from their tubs, and lined up ready to kiss the hands of their revered pastors. A scream, the smacking of whips, two scandalised missionaries galloping off into the distance, and the disappointed devotees were left in possession of the village.

By February 1906 my superiors decided that there was nothing more to be done in Urmia, a conclusion to which I had long ago come myself, and orders came for me to return to Tabriz.

This was the end of the Labaree affair, so far as we were concerned, but its indirect results had an important bearing on the relations between Turkey and Persia. The Begzadeh Kurds, though for the moment able to snap their fingers at the British and American Legations, plus the Persian Government, foresaw that a time of reckoning would probably come some day or other, and accordingly they had the brilliant inspiration of declaring that they were, and always had been, Turkish subjects,

and renounced their allegiance to the Shah. The Turks, who for some little time past had been stealthily encroaching on Persian territory, jumped at this pretext for more open aggression, welcomed the Begzadeh as returned prodigals, and began a process of infiltration into Persia, which soon assumed formidable dimensions, and would certainly have led to war between the two countries had Persia been in a position to make war at all.

I found the Valiahd back in Tabriz, and Nizam es Sultaneh still acting as governor under him. The atmosphere of the place seemed decidedly disturbed, and the unpopularity of the Valiahd greater than before. At this time unrest was growing all over Persia. The flagrant misgovernment and the ruinous extravagance of the Shah were quite sufficient to account for the dissatisfaction which prevailed; but financial embarrassments and administrative anarchy were no new things in Persia, and it is improbable that the discontent would have come to a head so soon as it did but for the lead given by Russia. As the result of the late disastrous war with Japan, and the popular effervescence which ensued, a modicum of representative government had recently been granted to the Russian people, and it was hoped—vainly hoped, as the event proved—that with the creation of the Duma a new era had dawned for Russia. Stimulated by this example, the Persians began to have yearnings after parliamentary government as a likely panacea for their own ills, and by degrees a constitutional movement arose in the capital and spread through the greater part of the country.

In Tabriz personal feeling against the Valiahd did as much as anything to turn peoples' thoughts towards a change of régime. It was known that Muzaffer ed Din would not make old bones, and no one relished the idea of having his son as absolute ruler in his place. Whether there was more than the vaguest idea anywhere of what constitutional government meant is open to doubt.

The harvest of 1905 had been very bad in Northern Persia, leading to dearness of bread and much distress. That of the next year was more abundant, but the people in general reaped little benefit from it on account of the machinations of a grain ring engineered by certain prominent men in Tabriz, of whom the leaders were the Imam Juma, an eminent ecclesiastic, and Saad el Mulk, the mayor of the town. Both these worthies stood high in the confidence of the Valiahd, who was popularly believed to be a sleeping partner in their combine—a belief which did not add to the affection of the people for their future Shah. It was left, however, to the patriots of the capital to make the first move.

In July of this year the demand for a Meshruteh (Constitution) and a Mejliss (Parliament) was put forward openly in Teheran, and pressed home by demonstrations on a vast scale at the British Legation, whose extensive grounds were thronged with crowds of Persians shrieking for liberty. The Shah had neither the energy nor the means to offer resistance for long to demands which were evidently backed by the great majority of his subjects, and an Imperial Rescript was soon published, announcing vaguely the grant of a constitution and the estab-

lishment of parliamentary government. The demonstration at once ceased, and with it any measures to give practical effect to the Shah's promises.

It was now up to Azerbaijan to do something, and the Teheran agitators pointed out to their Tabriz friends, in rather galling terms, that they, the citizens of the second town in Persia, had so far shown no zeal in the popular cause. The Valiahd himself provided a stimulus. Not only did he suppress the Shah's Rescript—a copy of which had been forwarded to him obviously with a view to its contents being communicated to the public,—but he also gave out that he disapproved of the promised concessions, and would withdraw them when he came to the throne. Accordingly the Tabrizis girded up their loins for action.

With a deplorable lack of originality, the only method of doing their bit which occurred to them was to follow the example of their fellows in Teheran and take "Bast" at the British Consulate. On the evening of 17th September a rumour reached me that some such project was in the air, and after referring to the Legation, I determined to discourage anything of the sort by all available means short of turning them out, which could not be done. I retired to bed on the 18th in the fond expectation that my eloquence would be sufficient to deter any would-be "Bastis" as soon as I was sounded, as I expected to be, on the subject. But no opportunity for argument was afforded me. At five o'clock next morning my servant awoke me with the depressing news that between twenty and thirty citizens, mostly Seyids and Mollahs, had already effected an

entrance, and were established on the Consulate premises. I hurried on my clothes and sent word to the visitors that their spokesmen might present themselves. Two gentlemen appeared—Seyid Hashim, a Pish-namaz or leader of prayer at a mosque, who proved to be the leader of the movement, or at least put forward as such; and another Mollah of no particular importance. Asked the meaning of this irruption, they informed me that they had come to put themselves under the protection of the British flag as a sign of protest against the delay in establishing the constitution and in order to support the action of the popular party at Teheran, and that they proposed to stay in the Consulate unless I ejected them. From this position no arguments of mine could move them, so I had to make the best of a bad job, warning them that the Consulate was not to be made a base for disorderly conduct, and that they must be particularly careful to avoid anything that could possibly lead to disturbances directed against the Armenian inhabitants; otherwise, out they would go. They replied that they quite understood this, and that the Armenians had already been assured that they need be under no apprehensions whatever.

At midday the bazars were closed, and did not open again until the demonstration was over nine days later. This shutting of shops is an ordinary Persian method of showing public dissatisfaction or protest, and represents the "down tools" of the British workman. It always causes the authorities anxiety, as all business stops, and Satan here, as elsewhere, is ready to provide mischief for idle hands to do.

The number of the guests in the Consulate quickly increased, until in the end nearly three hundred slept there nightly. Large as the building was, it could not provide house-room for so many, and I was obliged to run up tents in the garden and in an inner court for the accommodation of those unable to squeeze into rooms. They extemporised an open-air kitchen in the stable-yard, where vast quantities of rice seemed for ever cooking, and no trouble was experienced with the commissariat. Of course all this cost money, but there was evidently no lack of funds, and it was understood that the merchants of the town financed the movement.

Besides these regular boarders an indefinite number loafed about the place during the daytime. As time passed and the Valiahd took no action, more and more adherents flocked to join a movement which seemed assured of impunity, and the streets in our vicinity became completely blocked with crowds amounting to many thousands. A neighbouring mosque was commandeered as an annexe, and I was requested to hoist the Union Jack over it as a sign that persons there were equally under British protection with those in the Consulate itself, but I drew the line at this. Gradually it became understood that the popular party were to prevail, and all the notables of the town, including those like Mirza Hassan Agha, the chief Mujtehid, whose interests and inclinations had been hitherto with the Valiahd, put in a daily appearance at the mosque. Even the obnoxious Imam Juma deserted his patron and came. The Grand Vizier was bombarded with telegrams demanding the instant application of the

promised constitution, but for some reason or other no reply was received to any of them till all was over.

On the first day the Valiahd sent the Karguzar to the Consulate to inquire what the refugees wanted and to persuade them to leave, but the messenger was driven away with contumely. Next day he talked of opening the bazars by force, but thought better of it. On the morrow he became seriously alarmed at the news that the soldiers in camp outside the town were thinking of marching to the Consulate to join in the demonstration, and he distributed a donation of seven krans (2s. 4d.) per head amongst them. He also degraded Saad el Mulk from his office of mayor as a sop to the people, and that unpopular functionary at once took "Bast" in the palace.

No doubt it was at the prince's suggestion that Nizam es Sultaneh now requested me to call on him. In our interview he adopted a lofty tone, pointed out the dangers to public security which the prolongation of the present irregularities would entail, and the responsibility which might attach to me personally unless I brought my influence to bear to terminate them, and in fact treated me to the Persian equivalent of a "pi-jaw." I replied naturally enough that the "Bastis" had not come to the Consulate by my invitation, that he knew as well as I did that it would be contrary to all precedent to turn them out, and that no one would be gladder than I to put a stop to a situation which caused me untold inconvenience, if he would only show me the way.

The effect of Nizam es Sultaneh's lecture was rather marred by his Harrovian son, who conducted me downstairs at the end of the visit, and whispered as we were saying good-bye, "My father bids me tell you that the Valiahd is up the bloody tree, and the people have only to stick to it and he must climb down." I presume that the governor had promised the Valiahd to speak as he did, and that he was unable to refrain from communicating his real sentiments as well.

The troops now sent a deputation to say that they wished to join the happy throng at the Consulate, and they were only choked off with some difficulty. The prince evidently got wind of this and sent for me. He appeared much agitated, and begged me to do my best to get the people to quit the Consulate and resume business. I assured him that I did not like the situation at all, and was most anxious to end it, but that I saw small hopes of better things until a favourable answer came to the telegrams sent to Teheran. He said that he could get nothing out of the Government either, and we parted.

That evening it became evident that dissensions had broken out amongst the Consulate boarders, due to the ambitions of a young Mollah, Sheikh Salim, who could not brook the supremacy of Seyid Hashim. I never learned exactly what had passed between them, but Seyid Hashim came to me with the request that he might be allowed to sleep in my private part of the building so as to be safe from the murderous designs of Sheikh Salim, while Sheikh Salim sent a message to beg that one of

my Sowars might be stationed to guard his door during the night, as otherwise he would run risk of assassination from the infamous Seyid Hashim.

Next morning the soldiers sent word that they were on the point of starting. They were again dissuaded, but with even more difficulty than on the first occasion, and the prospect of four thousand or so armed men, half-starved and wholly undisciplined, arriving in the town under present conditions was really quite alarming. Information also reached us that the feeling against the Valiahd was growing in intensity, and that the promoters of the agitation, disappointed at receiving no reply to their telegrams and knowing that they could not expect the townspeople to remain with closed shops indefinitely, were prepared to go to any extremity rather than confess themselves worsted and take the consequences. It was high time that something was done, and I therefore sounded Seyid Hashim regarding the terms of settlement which would be acceptable to his friends. The Seyid, who seemed a little alarmed at the proportions assumed by the conflagration he had kindled, showed himself quite reasonable, and gave it as his opinion that if the Shah undertook to execute his promises regarding the constitution and the Valiahd ratified them and a general amnesty were assured, twenty men or so might remain in the Consulate to see things through, and the rest retire and reopen the bazars.

I hardly relished proposing these or any other terms to the Valiahd, and so appearing to act as spokesman for people who were more or less in

rebellion. It was much preferable that my intervention should be on behalf of the Valiahd. I therefore gave a hint to the Harrovian, and his tactful treatment resulted in another summons to the palace, when the prince implored me to persuade the people to return to their occupations. He said he would give me his word of honour that no one should be molested hereafter for his share in the agitation, and that I could assure the inhabitants of Tabriz in his name that he was not in the least opposed to a constitution. It was quite superfluous, he added, to keep an army of protesters in the Consulate, but he was ready to agree to a few remaining as long as they liked. If I could effect a settlement on these lines, the prince said that I should render a great service to the country and to himself. He had decidedly got the wind up.

I replied that I would do my utmost, and had hopes of success, but I ventured to hint that the people were likely to demand these assurances in writing. He eagerly promised to embody them in a letter to me, and I returned home to spend several hours over persuading a Committee of the refugees to accept these proposals. In the end they agreed, but insisted on adding two further provisions—viz., that permission should be given to illuminate the town as a sign of victory and rejoicing, and that the Valiahd should inform the other towns of Azerbaijan of the concessions made, and order them too to illuminate. They also stipulated that the Grand Vizier should address to them an official telegram announcing the grant of a constitution. The Valiahd readily accepted the new conditions; indeed he was

by this time ready to swallow anything, and promised to get the required telegram from the Grand Vizier. This was on 24th September.

We waited anxiously all the 25th, but no telegram came. On the 26th things again began to look very black. Violent speeches were made in the mosque against the Valiahd, who was held responsible for Teheran's delay. As a matter of fact, he was moving heaven and earth to have the telegram sent, for his bodyguard had deserted him, and he was practically alone in the palace. The members of various Government departments struck, and the administration of the place was at a standstill. I therefore again entered into communication with the Valiahd, who in the evening submitted to the Committee the draft of a telegram which he undertook should be sent by the Shah himself. So confident was he of success that he begged me to be with him by 8 A.M. next day to receive it.

That evening an incident occurred which more than ever convinced me that a speedy return to normal conditions was imperative. Stevens and I were seated in the drawing-room brooding over the situation, when suddenly Seyid Hashim burst in. He made a bee-line for my bedroom, entered it, and hid himself under the bed. Stevens went in and hauled him out of his shelter and into the drawing-room, where he took off his green turban and dashed it passionately on the floor. For a Seyid and a Mollah to remove his headgear in the presence of Christians was an act of desperation almost amounting to frenzy, and not even the comic appearance of the Seyid's shaven pate above a cadaverous

face fringed with a scanty black beard could relieve our anxiety. For a few minutes he was too hysterical and incoherent to give an intelligible account of his wrongs, but eventually he told us that while in the mosque he had been set on by a band of the Imam Juma's minions, suborned to assault if not to kill him, and that he was only saved by the intervention of one of my Sowars who happened to be present as a spectator, and who rescued and escorted him back to the Consulate. At this moment some one fired a shot outside, and there was an inrush of people through the gates, some of them timorous persons anxious for refuge from the danger of a riot, others to receive orders to avenge the outrage on their leader. It was all that we could do, aided by the Seyid when he recovered his equanimity, to avert an unpleasant outbreak.

By eight next morning I was at the palace, only to learn from the agitated Valiahd that the expected telegram had not arrived. He dispatched reminder after reminder to Teheran, and meanwhile I waited on, as I hardly relished returning to the Consulate empty-handed. At last, but not until past twelve o'clock, it came; the Valiahd wrote out his letter to me, pressed both documents into my hand, and adjured me to lose no time in delivering them.

The cobble-stones of Tabriz were not adapted for rapid riding, but I doubt if the men who brought the good news to Ghent would have made better time over them than I did on this occasion. The Committee made no difficulty about accepting the assurances of the Shah and the Valiahd as suffi-

cient satisfaction. They were publicly read in the mosque; Seyid Hashim, in an eloquent speech, dismissed the mob, and they went off praying and shouting to resume business as usual.

It is but justice to the Valiahd to add that his promises of amnesty were scrupulously kept. Not that provocation to act otherwise was lacking. On the contrary, the good people of Tabriz, their heads swelled by success, insisted in interfering in all sorts of administrative details which did not in the least concern them, and simply asked for trouble. Probably under other circumstances they would have got it, but the Valiahd, with his father on the point of death, was taking no risks, and would do nothing to jeopardise his chance of succeeding to the throne. He wisely bided his time.

Strangely enough, the next occasion for a popular demonstration was furnished, not by the hated Valiahd, but by the people's darling, Seyid Hashim. His triumph as a leader turned his head, and he aspired to the position of dictator, bearing down all opposition to his wishes by means of a band of 150 armed Seyids, which terrorised the town. Scarcely three weeks after the citizens had left the British Consulate, with the redoubtable Seyid at their head, 500 of them attempted to return in protest against his undemocratic arrogance. This time I was forewarned, and they found the gates closed, and had to assemble in the mosque instead. During the course of the day so many people joined in that it was plain that public opinion was against him, and the chief ecclesiastic sent round to inquire whether I had any objection to an appeal being made

to the Valiahd for his temporary removal from the town. Of course I did not care a rap, and said so, but later on a further message came, this time from the Valiahd, to the effect that he thought it better to comply with the popular desire and rid the town of the turbulent priest; but he was anxious that I should understand that he had not the slightest intention of going back on his promise of complete amnesty, and was only acting in the public interest.

The fallen idol was at once removed to Basminch on the Teheran road, twelve miles from Tabriz. A purse was made up for him, to which the Valiahd contributed, and he was sent on a pilgrimage to Meshed. Next year in the spring he returned to Tabriz, but he was never able to regain his former influence. Later on he went to Teheran, ratted to the Royalist party, and was eventually hanged by the Constitutionalists.

The next demand was for the exile of the Imam Juma, in which the Valiahd acquiesced for the sake of a quiet life, but, as the Imam did not leave immediately he was told, the bazars were closed quite unnecessarily. Indeed, from this time onwards, what used to be a measure reserved for grave emergencies became a regular habit, and I suppose that the bazars were shut three times a month on the average during the next six months. They were closed whenever it was desired to eject an unpopular personage, when the Shah delayed the promulgation of the Fundamental Law concerning the constitution, when he refused to apply it at once, and on every occasion of his coming into conflict with the Mejliss.

It was natural that the Heir-Apparent should be

very anxious for news of his father's health, so as to be ready to assert his rights at the propitious moment. Being under the impression that the Government were concealing the facts from him, he begged me to obtain regular bulletins for him from the Legation, which would enable him to check his other sources of information, and this led to frequent interviews, from which I gathered that he considered his sire was an unconscionable time in dying. At last he could stand the uncertainty no longer, and made up his mind to leave for Teheran at once.

His farewell to the members of the Enjumen (the title which the original Strike Committee had now assumed, and which corresponds to the modern "Soviet") was a masterpiece of hypocrisy on both sides. The Enjumen shed crocodile's tears at the thought of their bereavement, and implored him to leave his little son, the present Shah, to be their beloved Valiahd; while the prince begged the Enjumen to look on himself as their Agent in the capital, and to let him know all their wants. Where both parties were so sincerely glad to see the last of each other, the parting could hardly have been anything but cordial.

From this time the government of Azerbaijan passed entirely into the hands of the Enjumen. Nizam es Sultaneh had been dismissed shortly after the great demonstration, with which the Valiahd considered him, perhaps with justice, to have sympathised. His son, the Harrovian, poor lad, died not long afterwards. One Nizam el Mulk, who laboured under the disadvantage of being entirely

ignorant of Turkish, was sent down from Teheran as governor.

Early in January 1907 news arrived of the death of Muzaffer ed din Shah and the accession of Mohammed Ali.

In the other towns in Azerbaijan much the same thing happened as in Tabriz. Enjumens were set up, and the constitution was everywhere hailed with enthusiasm, but very few people had more than the haziest idea of what a constitution meant. At Urmia it was at first thought to be something concrete, and the belief prevailed for a time that five hundred camel-loads of "Meshruteh" were ready at Tabriz to be distributed throughout the province when a favourable opportunity occurred. Many villages started miniature Enjumens, and the peasants generally considered that a constitution implied the abolition of rent, and accordingly ceased all payments to their landlords. The effect of this was to cool the ardour of landed proprietors in the cause of freedom.

A not unusual phase in political reform is for its votaries to set up as censors of morals; nor were the members of the Tabriz Enjumen entirely exempt from this failing. A young man was denounced to them for having entertained a married lady in his house for improper purposes. Though the evidence was altogether insufficient to prove the charge, the Great Unpaid of the town at once condemned him to a public flogging. He was stripped naked, a Seyid sat on his head and a Seyid on his feet, while two other Seyids belaboured his back with heavy whips, administering seventy blows in all, from the

effect of which he nearly died. Another youth was publicly beaten for the heinous crime of wearing a stiff white collar, this being regarded in the light of an offensive foreign emblem.

Towards the end of the year 1906, negotiations between Great Britain and Russia for an amicable settlement of their rivalry in Persia had progressed so far towards a successful issue that the edict went forth that the lion was to lie down with the bear, British and Russian Consuls were to refrain in future from putting spokes in one another's wheels, and to live like brothers; but I cannot say that I noticed any great change in the attitude of the Russian Consul-General in consequence. He found great difficulty in stomaching the results of the constitutional movement, and seemed to take delight in administering all the pin-pricks he could devise to the popular party—an imprudent policy which recoiled on his own head later on.

While these events were happening in Tabriz, the state of Urmia and the districts bordering on the Turkish frontier was simply deplorable. The encroachments of the Turks became more and more flagrant, so much so that in the summer of 1906 the Persian Government was constrained to dispatch a Commissioner to Turkey to negotiate for a settlement of the whole frontier dispute. Long months of wrangling led to no result, and the Commissioner returned empty-handed.

It seemed the settled policy of the Turkish frontier officials to encourage Kurdish outrages on Persian subjects, whether Christian or Moslem, in order to drive them out of sheer desperation into welcoming

a change of allegiance as the only hope of alleviating their intolerable position.

From May to September I was away on leave, and returned to find the situation little changed so far as the town was concerned. Firman Firma, a cousin of the Shah and Persia's "only general," was there acting as governor and collecting a force to deal with the Kurds, which he attempted to do with disastrous results later on. The Enjumen had not abandoned their practice of interfering in administrative affairs, but without any noteworthy incident occurring.

It was in the frontier question that a change had taken place. My old "Basti," Majd es Sultaneh, his enemy the Valiahd being now at a safe distance, returned voluntarily from Tiflis in February, thus releasing us from any further responsibility towards him, and threw himself joyously into the political arena of Urmia. After some vicissitudes, including summary expulsion from the town, he finally succeeded in capturing the Enjumen and making himself boss of the place. If he could have controlled his other ambitions, all might have gone well with him, but he set his heart on taking vengeance on his old enemies the Begzadeh Kurds. With this object he imposed heavy fines on his political opponents, and with the proceeds raised and equipped a miscellaneous force of Moslems and Christians, with which in July 1907 he invaded the district of Dasht. The rashness of this proceeding is obvious, considering that his opponents were now under Turkish protection. All went well at first, and the Kurds withdrew to the mountains before the in-

vading host, which plundered their empty villages with great gusto. But soon Turkish soldiers appeared on the scene, and Majd with his army abandoned their tents and equipment and fled in inglorious rout to Urmia. Majd himself thereupon retired again to Tiflis, leaving the luckless Christians of Mawana and other villages which had joined him to the mercy of the Kurds. Most of them took refuge in Urmia, and their villages were occupied by Turkish soldiers after being first plundered by Kurds.

Russia and Great Britain now began to show increased interest in the doings on the Turco-Persian frontier—Russia because she did not at all approve of the Turks establishing themselves in a position which would lay the Caucasus open to a flank attack in the event of a war, and Great Britain in the cause of peace and order, and to some extent because the Anglo-Russian agreement being now an actual fact, she felt bound to support Russia and Persia. The Porte was pressed to agree to another Frontier Commission, and in order to increase the chances of a favourable issue it was arranged that the British Consul-General at Tabriz and the Russian Vice-Consul at Urmia (this post had been created since my last visit) should attend the Commission as *amici curiæ*, in the hope—a vain hope, as it proved—that they might be able to bring the two principals together. So no sooner had I returned to Tabriz than I was packed off to Urmia, arriving there in the last week of September.

On this occasion my visit extended to over a year—a sheer waste of time, for nothing whatever was effected. As the negotiations had no result,

it is superfluous to follow their wearisome course in detail, but what occurred is briefly as follows :—

The Chief Turkish Commissioner, Tahir Pasha, was already on the spot and his colleagues not far off, but we had to wait three months before Muhteshem es Sultaneh, the chief Persian Commissioner, arrived with his crew. Meanwhile the Turks had already occupied a strip of Persian territory about a hundred miles long by fifteen to twenty miles broad. Within this zone they maintained very fair order, while encouraging the Kurds to harry the districts outside it, in the hope that the luckless inhabitants would be forced to offer their submission and invite Turkish occupation as the sole possible remedy for their sufferings. This policy was often successful, and the zone of Turkish occupation gradually extended until it included Soujboulak, sixty miles east of the frontier hitherto recognised, whence Firman Firma, who had gone there with his army to chastise recalcitrant Kurds, was driven ignominiously. At last the Commission met in the beginning of February. The proceedings resembled nothing so much as the bullying of a weak cat by a large and aggressive dog. Tahir Pasha acted on the principle that "Whatever I say three times is right," and when he had repeated three times that all Kurds wherever found belonged to the Sultan, he asserted that the frontier question was settled in favour of Turkey and took himself off. It was a matter of three months to have him sent back.

Then the dreary farce began again. The negotiations degenerated into a desultory exchange of acrimonious notes between the Commissioners, with-

out the least advance being made towards a solution. The Turks, besides brute force, relied on ancient and obscure treaties dating back, in one case, to 1639; the Persians mainly on prescriptive right and undisturbed possession. By the middle of the summer both the monarchs represented on the Commission were in trouble, the Sultan having to deal with the Young Turk Party, who extorted a constitution from him, and the Shah being in serious conflict with his Parliament. In the end the Commission simply petered out.

In the course of the summer the outrageous state of insecurity on the frontier culminated in July in a raid on a large scale to the south of the town right down to the shores of the lake, in which many Persians were murdered, much property looted, and the Kurds added rape to their other misdeeds—a crime to which, to do them justice, they are not addicted. I had the satisfaction of rubbing Tahir Pasha's nose in it. He happened to call on me a day or two after, when the terror-stricken peasantry were flocking into the town from the ravaged region and had told their story, and I tackled him with the responsibility. The old ruffian laughed, and said that if anything had really happened, which he doubted, it must be the work of Persians disguised as Kurds with the intention of compromising the innocent Turks. I got very angry at this, and told him that if I were a high Turkish official I should be inclined to cry rather than laugh that such things should happen and I be morally responsible for them. He replied that he made a point of believing nothing that he had not seen with his own eyes. This gave

me my opportunity, and I challenged him to go with me and the Russian Vice-Consul and look into the matter himself.

He could not very well refuse, so early next morning we started. We rode for miles without seeing a single head of cattle in this the richest part of the most fertile region in Persia. All had been carried off by the Kurds or since removed into the town for safety. Many villages were entirely deserted, only large ones keeping their inhabitants, all of whom were within their walls maintaining an armed watch for aggressors. In two small villages on which the hand of the Kurds had fallen heavily we stopped to make inquiries, as the peasants still remained. They had little more to lose, and so were safe for the immediate future. They produced the blood-stained garments of their victims, and offered to disinter the bodies if the Pasha required further proof, but he now acknowledged that atrocities had been committed, while still denying that Kurds were responsible.

Finally, we came to the little town of Ardishai, on the south-west shore of the lake. It was completely deserted save for the carcases of five or six horses in the streets, half-eaten by dogs. Even the dogs had now fled. In this place the Kurds received a disagreeable surprise. The inhabitants, in pre-vision of an attack, hired a number of the Mawana villagers, who, living in the foothills and being in constant warfare with the Kurds, had more courage than the people of the plain, to guard the town; and as the Kurds cantered gaily in, not dreaming of any resistance, they were greeted with a volley

from the garrison concealed on the roofs. Several fell, and the rest retired in confusion. Just outside the town we saw two corpses stripped bare, and smelling most offensively after three days in the blazing sun. I asked the Pasha to come close and look at them, but he held his handkerchief to his nose and sent his orderly with me instead. This man, who knew the frontier and its inhabitants well, pronounced the bodies to be undoubtedly Kurds, and Tahir had to own up, but he was very sulky all the way home.

I think this was the hardest day I ever went through. What with thirty miles ride in the heat and the heart-rending scenes in the villages, where the women raved to us of their murdered husbands and violated daughters, I was quite knocked up, and I could not but admire the toughness of the Pasha, who, though an elderly and heavy man, did not turn a hair.

Foreign travellers, hospitably entertained by Kurds, sometimes bring back favourable accounts of them as manly sporting fellows; but these only see them on their best behaviour, and would have a very different tale to tell were they in the position of the peaceful Christian and Moslem inhabitants, who tremble at the very name of Kurd. The noble Red Man too was idealised by sentimentalists in bygone days; and, like the Injun, the only good Kurd is, so far as my experience goes, a dead Kurd, and the extirpation of the race would be a gain to humanity.

All this time I was staying in the English Mission, which had become a second home to me. Parry had returned to England a year before, the school

was at last opened in Van, and the activities of the missionaries were for the most part transferred to the Turkish side. Padres came on flying visits from time to time, but as a rule Reed, Neesan, and I were the sole occupants of the Mission. In August, Reed and Neesan left, and for a month or so I was alone.

Towards the end of September I was looking forward to Neesan's return with a newly-arrived padre, the Rev. Blamyre Browne, from Van, whence they were known to have started. Somehow, one can seldom explain how reports arise in Eastern lands, it began to be rumoured that something untoward had happened to the travellers; then, definitely, that they had been murdered. No evidence in support of the story was available, and I disbelieved it until two Nestorians arriving from Turkey came forward with the plain statement that they had seen two bodies lying by the side of a mountain road just across the frontier in Turkish territory. They could not positively swear that the victims were Browne and Neesan, for the stench arising from the decomposed corpses was such as to prevent a close investigation; but they had recognised Neesan's sun-helmet and Browne's pugaree, as well as the white cassocks which the English missionaries were accustomed to wear in summer. This was very bad news, and I went to see Tahir Pasha about it. He was seriously perturbed, for the murder of two Englishmen would be a much graver affair than the massacre of several hundred Persians, and we arranged to go out together next morning to investigate, and in the worst event bring in the poor mangled bodies.

The expedition never came off, for that night another traveller turned up with a message from the murdered men that they would be in by midday on the morrow. The story of the two Nestorians was an absolute concoction from beginning to end. No one had been murdered or even molested on the road, but the desire to make a brief appearance in the limelight, combined with the tendency to unveracity natural to their race, had been too much for them.

Before long the Turkish Commission drifted away. There was some babble of a fresh Commission being sent in the vague future, and Heaven knows how long I might have lingered in Urmia had not events in Tabriz resulted in urgent orders for me to return.

CHAPTER XII.

PERSIA: THE SIEGE OF TABRIZ.

During my stay in Urmia the post had worked only fitfully, and for weeks at a time we got no letters at all. The Kurds, besides intercepting mails, had an objectionable habit of cutting down telegraph-posts and carrying them off for fuel, and of beating within an inch of his life any functionary sent out to execute repairs. The consequence was that I hardly received any news of what was passing in Tabriz, much less in Teheran and elsewhere, where things had, however, moved apace. The Shah and his Parliament were from the very beginning constantly at loggerheads, sometimes one side gaining the advantage and sometimes the other, and neither letting an opportunity escape to leave undone the things they ought to have done, and to do the things they ought not to have done. The Shah, though ready when hard-pressed to make the most solemn protestations of devotion to the constitution, scarcely attempted to conceal his firm intention of upsetting it as soon as he could do so with safety; while the Parliament and its adherents quarrelled incessantly amongst themselves, browbeating the Shah and inter-

fering unreasonably in matters of administration when they had the upper hand, and intriguing with the Shah's uncle, the Zil es Sultan, to put him on the throne, when matters were going badly for them. At last, in June 1908, the Shah brought off a *coup d'état*, bombarded his faithful Commons in their place of meeting, strangled two popular leaders, exiled the chief ecclesiastics, and arrested his most prominent opponents, with the exception of such as found time to scuttle to the British Legation for safety. Martial law was proclaimed, and within a day or two he was completely master of the situation in Teheran, and all resistance ceased.

Other towns in Persia accepted the Imperial victory with resignation—that is to say, all with the exception of gallant little Tabriz. There the Nationalists at once flew to arms in support of the constitution, and commenced scrapping furiously with a reactionary party in the town, led by our old friend Mirza Hassan Agha, and supported by Rahim Khan, with a body of cavalry from Karadagh. The latter is a mountain region in the north-east of Azerbaijan, inhabited by a turbulent tribe, which possesses all the amiable characteristics of the Kurds except race and language, and Rahim Khan was an ex-brigand, who commanded the Valiahd's bodyguard before the accession. The fighting went on with varying success and occasional lulls for nearly four months, but became more strenuous as either side received reinforcements. The Shah sent down another of his numerous cousins, Ain ed Dowleh, as Governor-General of Azerbaijan, with a small force

of infantry and artillery, to reduce Tabriz to order; while a horde of Kurds from Maku, in the extreme north-west corner of Azerbaijan, were summoned to assist, and came to plunder. On the Nationalist side another fighting adventurer from Karadagh, Sattar Khan, arrived to take command of the Nationalist forces, who were also joined by quite a numerous body of Russian revolutionaries from the Caucasus eager to strike a blow against authority. Amongst them was a small but very efficient band of Armenians, members of secret societies, whose usual occupation of provoking massacres in Turkey was in abeyance during the temporary fraternisation of Turks and Armenians which followed the Young Turk success at Constantinople. Hostilities were from time to time suspended to allow of negotiations, which never came to anything.

All this while the British and Russian Legations were pressing the Shah to restore the constitution and summon a Parliament, and on 24th September His Majesty did publish a vague decree announcing that a fresh electoral law should be prepared and some kind of Assembly be convoked. Little faith was anywhere put in his promises, and so far as Tabriz was concerned the effect was entirely spoiled by the final paragraph: "However, the rebels of Tabriz have been guilty of such mischief, sedition, and bloodshed, that the Government cannot forego the punishment of these seditious scoundrels. Therefore it is proclaimed that until order is restored in Tabriz, the rebels suppressed, and the unfortunate people of that town freed from the curse of these

evildoers, Tabriz will be excepted from the effects of this Decree."

During the first week of October, Ain ed Dowleh prevented all access to the town, and the consequent shortness of provisions stimulated the Nationalists to a final effort. On the 9th a general attack on the Royalist forces took place: the Makulis were soundly beaten and chased from the town, Ain ed Dowleh's camp was thrown into such confusion that he retreated to Basminch, and Rahim Khan fled for his life. So did the reactionary leaders, whose houses were plundered by their victorious opponents at their leisure.

I reached home again in the first week of November, to find everything again comparatively quiet for the moment—the town entirely in the hands of the Nationalists; Ain ed Dowleh, twelve miles off, waiting for reinforcements; and no other enemies within reach. Maragha was captured and occupied, so were Sofian and Marend, little towns on the Julfa road, as well as Julfa itself; while the Enjumen of Khoi, an important place on the border of Maku, which a few months before had tried to depose the Khan of that district and got the worst of it, again came to the fore, and on a smaller scale showed the same zeal in the cause of the constitution as did Tabriz itself.

For the moment the Nationalists of Tabriz were under the impression that they had won the war, and, to adopt Mr Pitt's phrase, would save Persia by their example as they had saved themselves by their exertions, and were in consequence extra-

ordinarily cock-a-hoop. They ordered medals to be struck at Constantinople in honour of General Sattar Khan and his Lieut.-General, Bagher Khan, the latter a swashbuckler, who sprang from I know not where, and who, though not without courage, was chiefly remarkable for a most ferocious and grasping disposition. These medals, gilded for Sattar and plated for Bagher, bore the heroes' effigies on one side and the Persian emblem of the lion and sun on the other, and were sold for ten krans each. For ten krans more you could have a diploma entitling you to wear them in public. I purchased and still possess the medals, but dispensed with the diploma.

In the midst of their natural elation, and in spite of the conviction that they had downed the Shah, they still kept their heads sufficiently to bring in all the grain they could commandeer in the country round, and stored it in the Ark as a provision against a rainy day, though for the time being the glass seemed set fair. But for this precaution, the fate of the town would have been very different.

The first serious set-back to the Nationalist cause came at the end of November, when Maragha was retaken by Samad Khan, a semi-civilised tribal chief acting in the Shah's interests and appointed governor of that district. The defeated leader of the Nationalist troops received the bastinado on his return to Tabriz, but this was but meagre satisfaction for the loss of so important a place. Samad Khan treated his prisoners with much severity



THE BASTINADO.

besides taking it out of such of the townspeople as had adhered to the rebels. One radical Mollah afforded much sport to the Royalists. He was put into a tank full of water which came up to his neck, while men with long poles stood round and struck at his head. When he ducked he was safe; but as soon as he lifted his head out to get a breath of air, he received a crack on it, until finally he expired.

From this time forward nothing went right with Tabriz. Rahim Khan reappeared with his Karadagh brigands on the Julfa road, and invested the Nationalist garrisons at Marend and Sofian. The Maku Kurds sat down outside Julfa, and they and the Karadaghlis impartially plundered friend and foe alike. Samad Khan advanced gradually from Maragha, driving the Nationalists before him, while Ain ed Dowleh sat stolidly astride the Teheran road. No more provisions came into the town after the middle of January, and Tabriz was completely invested. Skirmishes took place from time to time, and Samad Khan made two attempts to force the defences, but the general scheme of operations was to reduce Tabriz by famine. In the end it came to a test of relative endurance, and the result depended on whether Tabriz could be forced to surrender before the Shah's troops got tired of sitting round the town in the bitter weather, or risings elsewhere caused them to be recalled. The regular soldiers with Ain ed Dowleh sometimes, but rarely, received something on account of their pay. The irregulars were kept together by the promise that they should be allowed to pillage Tabriz when it fell.

It was some time in January that the ubiquitous British correspondent made his inevitable appearance on the scene in the person of Mr Arthur Moore. He represented a group of papers which were strongly opposed to the Anglo-Russian agreement, and it was desirable that their correspondent should not be left alone to gather and report impressions which might injuriously affect its prospects. I therefore invited him to stay with me so as to have him under my eye, and I derived much solace from his companionship, though little suspecting what a firebrand I had admitted into a respectable Consulate.

Inside the town the Enjumen were still nominally in control, and an amiable landed proprietor, Ijlal el Mulk, acted as governor for them; but in reality Sattar and Bagher and their Fedais did just what they pleased. I cannot say exactly when the Nationalist braves began to call themselves by this name, but on my return from Urmia it was the term in general use for them. I believe the Armenian revolutionaries in Turkey were the first to whom it was applied. The name is derived from "Feda," meaning a sacrifice, and in the beginning Fedais were supposed to be persons prepared to sacrifice their lives for some higher interest; in practice they were more accustomed to sacrifice the general interests to their own—what we should nowadays call Die-hards. These Fedais were all well-paid, as pay went in Persia. Natives received from a shilling to two shillings a day, with what they could steal or extort by blackmail; volunteers from the Caucasus about three shillings, with the same extras. The Cause had no revenues of its own beyond the propor-

tion of the receipts of the Indo-European Telegraph Office, which was due to the central Government, and which had to be paid over by the office under the threat of cutting the wires; but this went very little way, and the deficit was made up by forced contributions from the richer citizens, whose reluctance to pay up was overcome by threats of corporal punishment and even assassination. After every skirmish the generals demanded donations for their brave comrades, and incidentally for themselves, and before long such exactions led to much discontent amongst the capitalists, who began to doubt whether, after all, King Log was preferable to King Stork.

On 21st February Sattar Khan in person led a sortie down the Julfa road, in the hope of breaking through the Karadagh forces and extricating the garrison of Sofian. It was a complete failure, for though the leader showed great personal pluck, only the merest handful of his men were inclined to follow him into any position where there was a probability of danger. Sofian surrendered almost immediately after, and Marend in a fortnight. I never heard the fate of their garrisons, but it was hardly likely to be a pleasant one.

The Royalist *riposte* came on the 25th in the shape of an attack by Samad Khan on the Tabriz post at Khatib, to the west of the town. The Nationalists held the orchards around it, which, split up as they were into sections surrounded by mud walls, were easy of defence, and the assault was beaten off without much difficulty. Ten Royalist corpses were collected from the scene of action, the loss

of the Fedais being three killed and five wounded. One prisoner was taken, and from him confirmation was received of the rumour that Royalist officers had circulated amongst their men the disgusting calumny that the inhabitants of Tabriz had all turned Babis—*i.e.*, heretics to Islam,—so that fighting against them might be looked on as a religious duty. After the victory this unfortunate was hustled into the presence of Sattar Khan, who sat majestically smoking a water-pipe, with his elated followers around him. The prisoner, in the centre of the circle, gyrated on his axis, salaaming abjectly to each of his captors and babbling, "I too am a Babi, gentlemen; I too am a Babi."

Undaunted by this failure, Samad Khan moved his headquarters eastward to the village of Karamelik, only a mile and a half from the town, and launched another attack on 6th March. This was a much more serious affair, and nearly attained success. The assaulting party, consisting of Chardowlehs (yet another objectionable tribe) and a detachment of regular troops, penetrated the outside defences and took the Hukmabad quarter of the town. Fortunately the Chardowlehs obeyed their natural instincts and started plundering the houses instead of pressing on, and thus gave time for Nationalist reinforcements to come up, so in the end the situation was saved and the attack beaten off. The Royalists left twelve corpses on the field, and their total losses must have been comparatively heavy. Besides five prisoners, trophies fell into the hands of the defenders in the shape of Samad Khan's drum, an essential part of a Persian general's equip-

ment, as well as the donkey carrying his lunch. The affair was an undoubted Nationalist triumph, obtained for a loss of only five killed and a dozen wounded.

By this time Tabriz was in need of some such encouragement, for provisions, though not yet on the point of exhaustion, were becoming sadly deficient, and the Shah showed no sign of relaxing his grip. His ancient grudge against the people of Tabriz obsessed him to such an extent that he had no eyes for what was happening elsewhere, and he disregarded the almost daily warnings from the Legations that his obstinacy was endangering his throne. The clouds were gathering around him fast. Early in the year Samsam es Sultaneh, a Bahtiari chief, put himself at the head of a rising at Isfahan in favour of the constitution, and a month later revolt broke out at Resht. In March, Bushire, Meshed, Shiraz, Hamadan, and Bunderabbas rose against the Shah, and he was not in a position to take measures against them. To overawe the capital was about all he could manage, in addition to the operations against Tabriz.

All this promised very well for the future, but for the present Tabriz was in a precarious position. Admiring messages came to the Enjumen from Resht and Isfahan, patting our patriots on the back and exhorting them to stick it out, but something more than platonic encouragement was required. By the end of March something very like starvation set in amongst the poorer class of citizens. The rich could still get food at a price, and the Fedais saw to it that they themselves never ran short; but

the store of grain and flour in the Ark, once believed to be inexhaustible, dwindled fast, and from the beginning of March was served out to the bakers in ever-decreasing quantities and at rarer intervals. By the end of the month gaps of two or even three days occurred without any bread being baked at all, and several deaths from starvation were reported amongst the poorest and weakest. No scheme for rationing the town or providing for the more helpless members of the community was devised or even discussed throughout the siege.

Gloomy as was the atmosphere inside the town, there were occasions which gave excuse for laughter, principally due to the pranks of Rahim Khan outside. This chieftain paid not the slightest attention to the orders of Ain ed Dowleh, and when two foreigners, a Swiss and a Greek, provided with safe-conducts from the Governor-General, fell into his hands while proceeding to Julfa, he impounded their effects, stripped off all their clothing excepting their galoshes, and passed them on to their destination in this quite inadequate costume. There was also a young Russian employed in the Consulate-General who wished to return with his wife and baby to his native country, and who likewise was given a safe-conduct by Ain ed Dowleh. More wary than the other two, he inquired first of Rahim Khan whether the pass would be honoured. The reply was "Yes," coupled with the condition that the travellers should bring with them as tribute six bottles of brandy and six of arrak, besides two pairs of braces. The last item leads one to hope that there was something lurking in that savage breast

which yearned for higher things, for the untutored Persian tribesman keeps his nether garments in position by means of a waistband and recks not of suspenders. The Russians duly started, and their gifts were graciously accepted by Rahim, who, however, on setting eyes on their comely little nursemaid, was so struck by her charms that he proposed that she should be left behind to live with him and be his love in Karadagh. His amorous advances were frustrated, though with difficulty, and the party reached Julfa in safety.

There was something of the humorist about Rahim Khan. All the same, I am glad that he never got into Tabriz with his merry men.

A diverting story came from Khoi, now beleaguered by Makulis. Here there were a number of Armenian Fedais, the backbone of the defence as in Tabriz. Experts in bombs, these gentlemen devised an ingenious machine to explode by pressure, and worked it into one of the heavy and ornate saddles used in Persia. They placed the saddle on the best-looking horse they could find (some one else's horse, of course), conducted the animal to the outskirts of the town, and set it free with a good lashing to gallop towards the nearest Kurdish patrol. The Kurds, as in duty bound, led it to their chief, who jumped on its back and was blown to smithereens.

About the middle of March, Pokhitonow left, having rendered his position untenable by his attitude of sullen hostility to the Nationalists. The latter paid off old scores on his departure by insisting on unpacking all his baggage, when he had already started and got as far as the bridge over

the Aji River, on the pretext that cartridges for the use of Rahim Khan were concealed therein. Of course this was untrue, and the flimsiest excuse for his public humiliation, but he was not allowed to pass until he submitted to the indignity. His successor, a Mr Miller, proved to be a much more tactful and conciliatory official, and I got on admirably with him during the time we were together.

With April came the last phase of the siege, starvation and despair. Active military operations on either side nearly ceased, as the besieged had hardly a kick left in them, and the besiegers were well-informed of what was passing inside the town, and knew that if they had patience the fruit would drop into their mouths of itself. On two occasions the Royalists dropped shells promiscuously into the town from a battery of modern guns lately imported by the Shah from France, killing and wounding a few non-combatants, but that was all.

This crisis Moore, to whom, as to Cato, the losing side offered an irresistible attraction, chose for adhering openly to the Nationalist cause. On 1st April—ominous date—I returned to the Consulate where I had left him, to find the bird flown, and a note for me announcing the fact quite in the style of a Victorian elopement, though it was not attached to his pin-cushion. Moore is still my very dear friend, and after satisfying his combative instincts to the full in the Great War, has now settled down to a respectable life ; but at this time, if there was a row on, as a good Irishman he felt bound to be in it. He certainly sold me a pup on this occasion, and the fact of a British subject leaving the

shelter of the British Consulate to join the ranks of rebels in arms against their Sovereign was rather hard to gloss over, and I had to boycott him for the time. He was taken in by Ijlal el Mulk, whose table was much better provided than mine, and henceforward devoted himself to the duty of trying to drill Fedais.

Simultaneously the Nationalists received another recruit from a still more unexpected source, in the person of Mr Baskerville, a young master in the American Mission school.

In the second week in April the foreigners, particularly the Turkish subjects, of whom there were quite five hundred, were getting very short of food, and the Legations made application to the Shah for a limited amount of flour to be admitted into the town for their exclusive use. The request was refused; indeed a favourable reply could hardly have been expected in the absence of any certainty that the Fedais would not appropriate the supply for themselves, but the Shah made the counter-suggestion that the foreigners should leave the town. This was impracticable, as few of them were willing to abandon their property to an uncertain fate, and besides, the Fedais would never have consented to part with such desirable pledges.

At this point quite three-quarters of the bakers' shops were closed permanently, and not even the action of Bagher Khan, who executed two bakers with his own hand, or rather with his own rifle, could induce their colleagues to produce bread without flour.

The foreigners, with the possible exception of

the Turks, were as a rule better off than the ordinary civilian natives, as they had laid in stores when it became evident that a siege was coming. Personally I was never short of bread, and was even able to help one or two other foreigners who were less fortunate, as I secured late in March, for a king's ransom, the last two sacks of Russian flour left in the town. From mid-January onwards we got no mutton, and the only meat procurable was buffalo beef, tough and of very inferior quality. A few fowls and eggs could usually be bought by those with money to spare, but I tasted butter and jam for the last time early in March. The awful grease used for cooking purposes—into the composition of which I never dared inquire—was perhaps the greatest trial, and nearly made one sick. Certainly I did not come out of it fatter or better in health, but on the whole, given the fact that a siege was on, there was really not so much to complain of. It was the indigent classes, numbering tens of thousands, who really felt the pinch.

In the middle of the month (April) the state of affairs in Bushire, where Tungestani mountaineers under the cloak of Nationalism were terrorising the town, led to the landing of a hundred British bluejackets to protect foreigners, and the Russian Government on its side now contemplated the forcible opening of the Julfa road, in order to admit food for the Russian and other foreign subjects in Tabriz.

Everybody in Tabriz recognised that the game was up. Most of the civilians were ready to submit on almost any terms which would ensure their lives; but the Fedais, knowing that for them there could



"FEDAIS" OF TABRIZ.

be no hope of pardon, still held out. Some of them advocated desperate measures in the last resort, such as an attack on the Consulates, so as to force on foreign intervention. Sattar Khan disavowed this idea, which he said was started by Bagher, and declared that he would protect the Consulates; but the gravest danger was from a rising of the populace, which had hitherto borne its sufferings with the patience only Orientals are capable of, but which now tended to get out of hand.

On the 17th the Consuls received a circular from the Enjumen drawing our attention to the shortness of food in the town and the growing difficulty of feeding both foreigners and natives, and later in the same day Miller and I were invited to visit the Enjumen. We found a crowded meeting, with Ijlal el Mulk, the nominal governor, presiding. He said that they had requested us to call in order to lay before us the very serious situation, and to beg us to do something to avert the danger which lay before all alike. The supply of grain, he said, was all but exhausted; the great majority of the population of over two hundred thousand souls was starving; and they feared that it would not be possible to hold them in check much longer. They might break out at any moment into rioting and pillaging the richer houses, in which they hoped to find food.

At this point one of the members, a most unpleasant Mollah, broke in to add that the mob would be no respecter of persons, and that there was no doubt as to who would have to bear the brunt of any disturbance, meaning thereby the for-

eigners. Only one other member, however, at all supported him, and the rest made him stop.

We replied to Ijlal el Mulk that if he would make some suggestion we would consider the possibility of carrying it out. What they wanted, he said, was an armistice, during which the Teheran road should be opened and provisions allowed to enter the town. Advantage would be taken of it to enter into negotiations with the Shah for peace, for which purpose they would appoint delegates, and they would at the same time enter into communication with the Nationalists in other towns. They mentioned the amount of grain consumed under normal conditions, and which they proposed should be admitted daily during the armistice, and requested us to submit these terms to our Legations to be placed before the Shah, which we duly did, but not with any great hope that they would be accepted.

Bread was very short indeed next day, only a favoured few apart from the soldiery being able to obtain any at all. The day after hardly a baker's shop was open, and crowds of women assembled in various parts of the town, who had to be dispersed by force. On the 19th they again gathered in great numbers at a shrine, whence they were dislodged with some difficulty by the persuasive eloquence of a Mollah told off for the purpose.

On this day there was renewed talk amongst the baser Fedais of assaulting a Consulate, but whether this plan was seriously contemplated or would ever have been carried out is uncertain. The Russian subjects, conscious of their unpopularity, were in a state of panic, and crowded into their Consulate

and the houses round it. All valuables from the Russian Bank were transported thither, and the place put into a state of defence. As the Russian escort consisted of thirty Cossacks with two machine-guns, it was quite capable of guarding the Consulate.

On the night of the 18-19th the Fedais played their last card in the shape of an attack on Samad Khan's headquarters at Karamelik by two parties of picked men, one numbering 300 and the other 150. The first was led by Moore, and the second by the American, Baskerville. The Royalists, well served throughout by their spies, were ready for them, and the attempt failed. By the time that the danger zone was reached Moore's band of dare-devils had dwindled to little more than a score and Baskerville's in proportion; but those left were fighters, and, led very bravely by their commanders, they actually took three lines of enemy entrenchments, and were only brought up in front of the last by lack of ammunition and support. Moore came through unscathed, but Baskerville was shot through the heart. His funeral next day was an impressive ceremony. Many members of the Enjumen attended it, and even sat through the Christian service in the American church, which was a demonstration of respect and regard quite without precedent in such a hotbed of Moslem fanaticism as Tabriz.

The depression caused by the failure of the forlorn hope was to some extent assuaged by the receipt of news from Teheran on the afternoon of the 20th that the Legations—and what exertions it must have cost them!—had extracted a promise from

the Shah to order Ain ed Dowleh immediately to cease hostilities for six days and allow the daily allowance of grain to enter Tabriz by the Teheran road. But for this concession the Russian force gathered at Julfa would already have been on its way to Tabriz, and it was now withheld in the hope that something might come of the negotiations for peace.

On receipt of our telegrams Miller and I called on the Enjumen to communicate the glad tidings and urge them to procure a cessation of hostilities on the Nationalist side, which they immediately did. We informed them that we proposed to send representatives to Ain ed Dowleh to press the dispatch of provisions, and we told them to address him a letter expressing their readiness to choose delegates to treat for peace.

C. Stevens went as my representative, and the Russian sent one of his community, an Armenian. They carried the Enjumen's letter, as well as one from ourselves jointly, in which we informed Ain ed Dowleh of the Shah's orders concerning an armistice, and requested him to co-operate with our delegates in ensuring the entry of an immediate supply of provisions. The Enjumen had kept us waiting an age for their letter, and it was quite dark when the delegates started. As soon as they were well on their way, it suddenly occurred to me that they would run great danger of being fired on by the Shah's troops when they approached without warning in the darkness, especially so soon after the night attack on Karamelik, and I passed a very anxious time until news came of their safe arrival. Such

apprehensions, however, were quite unjustified, for the cavalcade, consisting of two carriages with two Indian Sowars, two Cossacks, and two Ghulams on horseback, passed right through the Royalist lines, and drew up at Ain ed Dowleh's door in Basminch, twelve miles away, without being challenged, or even noticed at all so far as they knew. Such watch and ward does a Persian army keep in time of war.

Next day towards evening their first report came in, to the effect that Ain ed Dowleh stoutly asserted that he had received no orders whatever concerning an armistice or provisions, but that on the strength of our assurance that the Shah had given such instructions they had persuaded him to open the Basminch road. Two days later they reported further that a consignment of eight tons of wheat, sent with Ain ed Dowleh's permission by a private person at Basminch as a present to the starving poor of Tabríz, had been turned back by the Shah's officers, who declared that they had no instructions to allow food to be sent, and would not obey them if they had. They had not, they said, suffered all sorts of privations for months to be baulked of their prey at the last moment. An angry scene ensued, and Ain ed Dowleh threatened to take himself off to Teheran, as no one obeyed his orders. On this day, too, Samad Khan made an attack on the Nationalists at Khatib.

Whether the Shah had sent the instructions and they miscarried, or whether he simply lied to the foreign Ministers, never appeared. Next day, the 23rd, the Russian troops at Julfa received orders to march to Tabriz. It was high time, for the town

was now in the last extremity, many of the poorest lying exhausted about the streets, and few finding any food but green-stuffs. I saw some picking and eating the grass growing in the roads.

As soon as the Shah learned that the Russians had crossed the frontier he sent precise orders, which this time reached them, to Ain ed Dowleh and all his commanders to cease hostilities, open all the roads, and admit unlimited provisions to Tabriz, and in a few days things began to right themselves. On 30th April the Russians arrived. The Royalist armies were already dispersing. Samad Khan retired to Maragha. Rahim packed up his loot—three hundred camel-loads, as was reported, I hope, with exaggeration—and took himself back to Karadagh to enjoy the fruit of his labours. Ain ed Dowleh drove rapidly to Teheran, with his troops, clamouring for their pay, in full cry behind him.

The Shah now issued decree after decree announcing constitutions, reforms, and liberty. But it was too late. The patriots of Resht and Isfahan, who had looked on while Tabriz was in her agony and the constitution was withheld, now that all reasonable demands had been granted, decided that it was the moment to move on Teheran. Their forces effected a junction outside the capital, and after a feeble resistance he who had driven so many of his subjects into "Bast" during his short and troubled reign took "Bast" himself at the Russian Legation, and thereby signified his abdication.

But this was not until July, and I had left Persia for a more peaceful place of residence before the *dénoûment*.

CHAPTER XIII.

CRETE.

St Paul, in his Epistle to Titus, first Bishop of Crete, was inclined to be severe on the Cretans. Every pious child knows what the Apostle said: "For there are many unruly and vain talkers and deceivers, especially they of the circumcision, whose mouths must be stopped, who subvert whole houses, teaching things which they ought not, for filthy lucre's sake. One of themselves, even a prophet of their own, said, The Cretans are always liars, evil beasts, slow bellies. This witness is true. Wherefore rebuke them sharply."

That the Cretans number many vain talkers, teaching things that they ought not, and that filthy lucre is seldom out of their minds, their best friends can hardly deny; but I did not find them greater liars than the other inhabitants of the Levant, nor particularly evil beasts. The accusation of being slow bellies may be true, but one cannot well offer an opinion on the subject without knowing what the phrase means.

It is a thousand pities that St Paul, while laying down the rule that the Cretans' mouths should be

stopped, did not indicate the means whereby this desirable result could best be attained.

"Sharp rebukes" may have been efficacious in the first century A.D., but I can certify from bitter experience that in the twentieth they were of no practical value at all.

Crete was the last considerable tract of territory to be added to the Turkish Empire. When Candia fell in 1669 after a siege of over twenty years, the tide of Ottoman conquest was already on the ebb, and so far from this latest acquisition adding to the strength or prosperity of the State, successive Sultans must have cursed the day when Mohammed IV. conceived the design of annexing the contumacious race which inhabits the island. No conquerers have ever been able to reduce them completely to order, neither the Arabs, nor the Venetians, nor the Turks; and where violence and oppression failed, it was hardly to be expected that the mild reproaches of four protecting Powers would meet with any considerable measure of success.

The modern history of the island may be taken as dating from March 1897, when the Great Powers, sick to death of a series of revolts, massacres, and counter-massacres which made Crete a European scandal, presented a Collective Note to both Turkey and Greece, stating that under present circumstances the island could not be joined to the latter as the inhabitants demanded, but that it would be endowed with an autonomous régime under the suzerainty of the Sultan, for whom the Powers would hold it in trust. The Greek Government were at the same time summoned to withdraw the troops

and ships they had sent to support the revolted Cretans, but this injunction was not obeyed until official hostilities broke out between Turkey and Greece in the spring of the following year. The war of 1898 lasted little more than a month, not much longer than was required for the Greek Army to scurry from the Turkish frontier to Thermopylæ before the vastly superior Turkish forces; but the promise of autonomy was kept. The Turkish troops in Crete were summarily ordered to withdraw after a massacre of Christians in Candia in September 1898, during which about fifty British soldiers and sailors were killed and wounded; and Prince George, second son of the King of Greece, was appointed to govern the island as High Commissioner of the four protecting Powers—Great Britain, France, Italy, and Russia.

The only outward manifestations of Turkish suzerainty left was the Turkish flag flying on a little island at the entrance to Suda Bay. The State of Crete coined its own money, issued its own stamps, had its own separate flag, maintained a local militia, and was allowed to levy custom duty even on goods imported from the suzerain country. Between it and Turkey was interposed the powerful buffer of the protecting Powers, each of which was to maintain a body of troops in the island until the Cretans gave proof that they were able to maintain public order by themselves, and, in particular, until the safety of the Moslem element should be assured.

Obviously this arrangement, which satisfied none of the parties concerned, neither the Greeks, nor the Turks, nor the Cretans themselves, could offer no

permanent solution of the Cretan question. Indeed, it seemed to confirm the theory of those who hold that the diplomatist, like the plumber, deliberately executes each job entrusted to him in such a manner as to ensure that there will be a fresh call for his services before long, and abhors any settlement which promises durability.

One would have thought, however, that the advantages they now enjoyed, which included self-government and lighter taxation than any State in Europe, would content for a time a people so recently emancipated from the heavy Turkish yoke. But nothing would satisfy the unreasonable creatures short of union with what they styled the "Mother Country," bankrupt and discredited though she was. Once their constitution was elaborated and a Parliament elected, the deputies periodically voted resolutions in favour of union with Greece. At first these were but platonic expressions of opinion, made more to keep the question open than with any hope of realisation in the immediate future; and it was quite within the bounds of possibility that the island would have settled down eventually under the autonomous régime had the High Commissioner been able to rise to the occasion. Unfortunately Prince George was selected solely because he was the son of the Greek king, and without taking into consideration his own qualifications for such a post, which did not include either tact or good manners. He surrounded himself with Greeks to the exclusion of Cretans; fell foul of the representatives of the protecting Powers, going so far as to declare his intention of knocking together the

heads of the Italian and French Consuls—a remark which, duly repeated to the interested parties, did not make for cordial relations; and worst of all, he took sides in local politics. The little assembly of Crete had quickly divided into two parties—the Conservatives, headed by M. Michelidakis, a retired schoolmaster; and the Liberals under M. Veniselos, one of the leading lawyers of Canea; and the High Commissioner threw in his lot with the former, at times stumping the country and making electioneering speeches on their behalf. He even had M. Veniselos cast into prison. Under such circumstances there was but one course for a good Cretan to take—namely, to retire to the mountains in revolt, and this M. Veniselos proceeded to do. His little insurrection was soon suppressed by the troops of the protecting Powers, who, however, declined to renew Prince George's mandate as High Commissioner for a further period, and requested him to leave Crete, which he did under pressure in 1906.

An important consequence was the feud thus started between Veniselos and the Greek dynasty, which has had such disastrous consequences for Greece.

To placate the Cretans they were informed that the Powers, "in order to manifest their desire to take into account as far as possible the aspirations of the Cretan people and to recognise in a practical manner the interest which the King of Greece must always take in the prosperity of Crete, had agreed to propose to His Majesty that henceforward every time that the post of High Commissioner of Crete became vacant, His Majesty, after confidential dis-

cussion with the representatives of the Great Powers at Athens, shall nominate a candidate capable of carrying out the mandate of the Powers in the island, and that he (the King of Greece) shall officially inform the Powers of his choice." This was obviously a step, and an important one, in the direction of union.

In accordance with this promise, M. Zaimis, the general utility man of Greece, was nominated by the king and appointed by the Powers as High Commissioner immediately Prince George retired. A safe if somewhat timorous statesman, he managed to discharge his difficult duties with such success that in May 1908 the Powers were able to inform the Cretan Government of their intention to begin withdrawing their troops gradually, and that the evacuation would be completed within a year. But in October of the same year all the fat was in the fire again.

At the beginning of this month Bulgaria, hitherto a vassal State, declared her complete independence of Turkey, while Austria definitely annexed Bosnia and Herzegovina, up till then nominally part of the Turkish Empire. It was hardly to be expected that so magnificent an opportunity and so excellent an example would be neglected by the Cretans, and their indomitable assembly at once passed a resolution, not this time demanding union with Greece, but declaring that union had actually taken place, and that Crete henceforward formed part of the Greek kingdom. So far as union could be put into force without the participation of Greece and the consent of the Powers, it became an accomplished

fact. The Greek constitution was applied as far as practicable, Cretan stamps were surcharged with the word "Hellas," to the joy of collectors, all functionaries were required to swear allegiance to the King of Greece, justice was administered in his name, and the Greek flag replaced the Cretan. For the High Commissioner's Government was substituted a business administration composed of three functionaries, and termed the Executive Committee.

It is hard to say to whom this dashing exploit of the Cretans was most embarrassing. The Greeks, in the throes of a military revolt against the incapacity of the Court and Government, shivered at the idea of a quarrel with Turkey over Crete. The Young Turks, though clinging to their suzerainty over Crete, and cherishing the hope that full sovereignty might eventually be restored, had their hands full pending a final settlement with Abdul Hamid. As for the protecting Powers, if they were to maintain their control over Crete and keep their undertakings towards the suzerain Power, they knew, or ought to have known, that the military evacuation must cease, and the troops already withdrawn return to their stations. But this they could not bring themselves to contemplate, and they went on with the evacuation, salving their consciences with a solemn declaration to the Cretans that "they considered the union with Greece as dependent on the consent of the Powers who had contracted obligations towards Turkey, but that they would not be averse to considering with favour the discussion of the question with Turkey, provided

that order was maintained in the island, and that the security of the Mussulman population was assured." In fact they tried to shelve the question.

Things were in this state when I arrived a year later towards the end of October 1909. The international troops were all gone, and an Executive Committee, composed of three judges and tacitly recognised by the Powers as the *de facto* Government, was administering the island with very fair success, while the people were on their best behaviour, though getting a little restive at the delay in discussing the question of union with Turkey.

The climate of Crete is one of the most attractive in the world; certainly no place I ever visited myself has a better one. The summer heat is at no time excessive, yet the summer is a long one. The winter, though rather rainy, is never really cold. I passed four winters in the island without experiencing either snow or frost. This of course applies only to Canea at the sea-level. In the interior, mountains rise to a height of eight thousand feet, and are crowned with snow well on in the summer months, and other parts of the island are considerably hotter than the capital. The winter rains and the long warm summer combine to produce a most luxuriant vegetation along the coast. Oranges, olives, citrons, and grapes grow in profusion. In the garden of my house at Halepa, the residential suburb of Canea, geraniums flourished like weeds, and had to be pulled up every year to give space for other flowers. The violets of Crete must be seen to be believed. I have never known them so large and so fragrant elsewhere.



A STREET IN CANEA.

Byron may well have had Crete in his mind when he wrote the famous lines :—

> "Know ye the land of the cedar and vine,
> Where the flowers ever blossom, the beams ever shine;
> Where the light wings of Zephyr, oppressed with perfume,
> Wax faint o'er the gardens of Gul in her bloom;
> Where the citron and olive are fairest of fruit,
> And the voice of the nightingale never is mute . . .
> And all save the spirit of man is divine."

In making this exception, His Lordship showed himself as acute an observer as Bishop Heber when mentioning "Ceylon's Isle" in his hymn.

The lot of the Consuls in Crete was on the whole a happy one. It is true that a serpent lurked in our little Eden in the shape of "Union," and that a certain degree of monotony was attached to the basic duty of the representatives of the protecting Powers, which was to watch what the Cretans were doing, and tell them to stop it. But there were compensations. In the first place, the semi-independent status which Crete enjoyed relieved the Consuls from the sometimes irksome vassalage to a diplomatic representative, and we all dealt direct with our Foreign Offices. Then the tedium of always saying "Don't!" to the Cretans and imploring them to be good was to a large extent corrected by their extraordinary versatility in wrong-doing. One never knew from day to day in what direction they would break out next and need to be headed off. And lastly, the perfect harmony which prevailed between the four of us made it a pleasure to work together. It had not always been so, but experience had finally taught the Consuls in Crete that any discord in their own ranks simply played

into the hands of their obstreperous charges, and resulted in infinite trouble to themselves. By the time I arrived it had become understood that the only sound policy was to sink all national and personal considerations and co-operate for the good of the firm, with the result that we were always able to show an absolutely united front to the Cretans, and, if circumstances demanded, to our own Governments. A real *entente cordiale* is rare enough between the representatives of two nations: this is probably the only instance on record of its occurring and being maintained for years between four of them.

As Crete was not an independent State, the island Government had no representative in foreign capitals. Consequently the Consuls at Canea served as the only channel of communication between the Cretans and their protectors, and the office was far from being a sinecure. It seems to me that we were always writing or receiving Notes. Sometimes our missives would be dictated by our Governments after they had come to an agreement amongst themselves; at others we agreed on a draft, and then telegraphed it home for approval, which might or might not be accorded after the four Powers had laid their wise heads together and exchanged views, all of which took a considerable time. It was only in comparatively unimportant matters that we could act on our own without applying for instructions. In quiet times the Consuls had a weekly meeting to discuss affairs, but in periods of crisis—and there was usually a crisis of some sort on—we met two or three times a week or even oftener. The meetings

were held at the house of the Doyen, the senior Consul-General, who for the most of my time in Crete was the French representative, Monsieur Bertrand. He was older than the rest of us, had very large experience and a sound judgment, and made a most excellent President. After him the Russian Consul-General (Schebounine) presided, and when he left my own turn came.

A condominium has this amongst other defects, that it can do nothing without the participation of all its members, and in consequence one could hardly ever get away from Canea. Crete is full of archæological remains, fine scenery, and other objects for interesting excursions, but I was only able in nearly five years to absent myself for two trips to Candia—one to visit Sir Arthur Evans' excavations of the palace of Minos at Gnossos, and the other to interview on behalf of my colleagues M. Michelidakis, who resided there.

From the social point of view there is not much to be said in favour of Crete. The island seemed to possess no attraction for strangers, who hardly existed outside the Consular body. The British colony consisted of the clerk in charge of the Eastern Telegraph Station and his wife, with occasionally an English governess engaged in teaching little Cretans—an occupation which seldon proved sufficiently attractive to lead to permanency. With the Cretans themselves we had little to do excepting officially, mainly because their contumacious attitude in political matters necessitated a certain reserve on our part towards them; but at no time were they very sociably inclined. Besides the four protecting Con-

suls, there were Austro-Hungarian and German Consuls, excellent fellows both of them, and these, with the High Commissioner's private secretary, his aide-de-camp, and their wives, comprised the permanent foreign circle. I should explain that since M. Zaimis tactfully retired on a holiday to Athens before the proclamation of union with Greece in 1908 (it was never quite understood whether he knew what was coming or not), he had not returned to Crete. But the Powers for the time continued to maintain the pleasing fiction that he was still their High Commissioner, and his aide-de-camp and secretary, both of them Greek officials, remained to keep the place warm for him, and incidentally to act as unofficial agents of the Greek Government.

It was a very pleasant little coterie, though mightily limited in numbers. Fortunately reinforcements came in the shape of the officers of the warships in Suda Bay. When the international troops were withdrawn it was arranged that their place as props to the authority of the protecting Powers, protectors of the Mussulmans, and guardians of the Turkish flag on Suda Island, should be taken by a ship of each Power to be permanently stationed at Suda. Thus there were always four ships within an hour's walk of Canea, and in times of crisis, when the Powers felt called on to demonstrate their might to the Cretans, the number might be doubled; and the constant opportunity for association with officers of the British Navy more than anything else rendered my service in Crete one of the most pleasurable memories I have. H.M.S. *Minerva* and H.M.S. *Diana* were the permanent British guardships, taking

it in turns to do three months' duty at Suda, and I am happy to say that the friendship then formed with Captains Wake and Hyde Parker of the *Minerva*, and Captain Kemp of the *Diana*, continue unto this day. Other ships came from time to time, notably the *Barham* and *Medea*, but the *Minerva* and *Diana*, sister ships, were, one or other, always with us.

The resources which Crete offered to the stranger in search of amusement were not extensive. The weather off the coast is almost always rough, and though the "tempestuous wind Euroclydon" which worried St Paul and his companions frequented the south side of the island, there was no lack of similar breezes on the north. Boating, therefore, was out of the question as a regular pastime. Shooting, too, was very poor—pigeons, a few quail, and still fewer snipe and woodcock in their seasons, and that was all. Bridge in the evenings and tennis in the day-time were about all the recreations Canea afforded, and anything beyond these had to be looked for at Suda Bay.

It was no easy task for the British officers to find amusement for their men in a spot so lacking in resources as Suda, but they did their best. In summer aquatic sports in the sheltered harbour, with a very occasional game of cricket and the rest of the year football and hockey, kept them fairly well occupied. Rugby football was the staple game, and matches with the French, less often the Italians, were continually arranged. The French generally won, but the games were always well contested, and national rivalry was keen. During such matches one often saw couples dotted about the

ground engaged in vigorous personal conflict while the scrum rolled far away from them. After one match in which the British ship had managed to snatch an unexpected victory, when the French captain called for the usual three cheers for the winning side, his disappointed team replied emphatically, "Non, non!" and declined to cheer. Their captain, a petty officer, was much chagrined at this breach of etiquette, and the same night addressed a delightful little note in English to his British opposite number, apologising for the failure of his team to "scream hurrah." Such little incidents arose entirely from keenness over the game, and in no way affected the relations between the various ships, which were as good friends as their Consuls on shore.

The French officers never took part in these games, considering that it would lower their dignity and be subversive of discipline to play with their men—results which were certainly not apparent in the case of the British.

By the time that their unilateral union with Greece was a little more than a year old, the statesmen of Crete began to reflect that they were no nearer practical union than before, and that the government by functionaries embodied a grave defect in that it left the politicians out in the cold. Furthermore, the event for which they had been waiting as an opportunity for bringing their affairs to a head—viz., a general election in Greece, in which they were determined to take part in spite of the veto of the Powers—seemed as far off as ever. These considerations combined to decide them to

hold elections for a fresh assembly of their own, and this was done in the spring of 1910. The assembly met in May, and its first sitting produced symptoms which were far from reassuring. By the Cretan constitution a certain number of seats were reserved for Mussulmans, and when the session was opened in the name of the King of Greece and the members were called on to swear allegiance to His Majesty, the Mussulman deputies naturally demurred. One of their number rose to read a protest, but the document was snatched from his hands and torn up, and a Christian deputy slapped his face.

The Mussulmans withdrew in a body, and the victim of assault and battery repaired at full speed to the French Consulate, where the Consuls had assembled in prevision of something interesting happening in the assembly. He entered our presence holding his cheek tightly like one just freed from the dentist's chair, and calling on Heaven to witness his sufferings and the Consuls to avenge them. As a matter of fact, he was not in the least hurt, and was probably relieved at having passed through his ordeal so cheaply.

A few days afterwards the assembly voted the permanent exclusion of the Mussulman deputies, since they refused to recognise union with Greece, and further decreed that no official should be allowed to exercise his functions or draw his pay if he failed to take the oath of allegiance. This was going a bit too far. The Porte protested loudly to the Powers, and the Powers, through their Consuls, informed the Cretans that they would not allow

Mussulman officials in Crete to be prevented from discharging their duties or to be deprived of their pay, on the ground that they had not sworn allegiance to the King of Greece; and that if on the same pretext Mussulman deputies were excluded from the chamber, the Powers would consider what steps were required to regularise the situation. As a preliminary measure the number of warships in Cretan waters was doubled, and finally the Cretans were notified that, unless they yielded to the demand as to Mussulman deputies and officials, troops would be landed at the principal ports, the Custom Houses would be occupied, and the Customs receipts impounded.

It was fortunate that at this moment we had so prudent a man as Veniselos at the head of affairs. The first trial of strength in the assembly had resulted in a small majority for him, and a new Executive Committee was formed by himself and two of his followers. In his hot youth a rebel and a fighter, by this time he had cooled down almost into the prudent statesman he is recognised to be to-day. Just as keen as his countrymen in the cause of union, unlike most of them he knew where to draw the line, and when it was necessary to yield to superior force. Thanks to his influence, the assembly passed a resolution empowering the Executive to bow to the orders of the Powers; and though they at once adjourned until December, it was understood that the Mussulman deputies would then be allowed to take their seats.

The concession was but grudgingly consented to, being considered as a retrograde step so far as

union with Greece was concerned, nor did it add to M. Veniselos' popularity. This was of small account, for shortly afterwards he was summoned to aid in the regeneration of Greece, which was at the time in a state bordering on chaos, and he definitely abandoned political life in Crete.

Along with Veniselos there proceeded to Greece, by the grudging permission of the Powers, another of our politicians, M. Poloyorghis, with the same excuse of being by origin or descent a Greek and not a Cretan, and on the same condition that he should renounce all further participation in Cretan politics. After managing to secure election to the Extraordinary National Assembly which was to deal with the Greek crisis, but which was soon dissolved, he failed to be chosen a member of its successor; and he thereupon returned to Crete to resume his career there, asserting in the most unblushing way that the promise to abstain from Cretan politics had been extorted from him by duress, and therefore need not be kept. Without being taken very seriously by his countrymen, he obtained enough influence for evil to become a regular nuisance, but he managed to display a certain waggishness in ill-doing which was not without its amusing side.

The departure of their leader, who left no one capable of filling his place, quite demoralised the Liberal Party, and though they managed to form a Government without him, consisting of three medical men—surely the only instance of an administration consisting entirely of disciples of Æsculapius,—it was understood that some change would

have to be made when the assembly met again in the winter.

Such a political lull as now occurred did not by any means imply an interval of joyous ease for the Consuls. The question of the Mussulman population was always with us, and whenever the Porte had nothing better to do, it took enormous pleasure in submitting to the protecting Powers lists of outrages which the Mussulmans were asserted to have suffered at the hands of the Christians. There was something rather piquant in these complaints, considering the source from which they came. It would be going too far to assert that the Christians behaved like perfect gentlemen to their Moslem countrymen. Too many old feuds still rankled, too many grudges were still to be paid off for this to be possible; but on the whole their attitude up to this time had been quite as tolerant as could be expected. The Mussulmans were certainly vastly better off than Christians in Turkey, and successive Governments did all that lay in their power to protect the weaker element.

The situation as between Mussulman and Christian in Crete differed from that prevailing in other parts of Turkey, in that both were of the same stock and spoke the same language. The Turks had never colonised the island, and the Mussulmans were merely the descendants of Christians who had adopted the dominant religion; but though all spoke Greek, the gulf fixed between them and the Christian element was just as deep as elsewhere, if not deeper.

In 1898, when the Turkish troops were finally



MOUNTAIN CRETANS.

ejected, the total of the Mussulman inhabitants was approximately sixty thousand. Ten years later it had fallen to less than half this number through the emigration of the more high-spirited amongst them who could least stomach the change of régime, and of the worst characters, who had most to fear in the way of reprisals.

The weak point in the Cretan case was the failure of the courts to punish offences against Mussulmans. This was partly due to religious feeling and the consequent reluctance of Christians to give evidence against Christians, and partly to the unwillingness of juries to find a verdict of guilty in such cases; and it is a lamentable fact that during four years I never knew an instance of a Christian being punished for the murder of a Mussulman. Occasionally a Mussulman murdered a Christian, and then justice was done right enough. However, murders were by no means frequent until later on, when there was practically no Government worthy of the name, and the outrages of which the Porte now complained usually turned out to be little more than cases of rough horse-play and bullying, unpleasant enough for the members of a once dominant element to endure at the hands of their former helots, but trivial grievances to be put forward by a Government with so black a record of its own as Turkey. Such as they were, all had to be investigated; for if there was one thing clear in the general imbroglio it was that the Powers had assumed the obligation of looking after the safety of the Mussulmans. As time went on and discipline generally relaxed, the Mussulmans certainly had much to complain of,

and every crisis of popular excitement resulted in a crop of murders and other outrages.

As the time for the reassembling of the Chamber approached, the question of the Mussulman deputies gave us some little anxiety, and we did not fail to impress on these gentlemen the urgent necessity of avoiding anything which could be considered provocative and give rise to an incident. They took our exhortations to heart and tactfully postponed their arrival, when the Chamber finally opened in November, until the Christian members had inaugurated the session in the name of the King of Greece, and fired off the usual resolution maintaining union and calling on the Powers to ratify it. Then the Mussulmans sidled in, and unobtrusively handed in to the President their little protest in writing against the proceedings for entry in the Minutes, and that was well over.

For several months past negotiations had been in progress between the various parties for the formation of a Coalition Government as the best method of steering the ship of State through such troubled waters, but they had fallen through because the Michelidakists held out for three seats on a new Executive Committee instead of two, which were offered them. Accordingly a Veniselist-Koundouros Government was formed, which could count for the time on a small majority.

This M. Koundouros had been a Minister, or Councillor, as it was termed, under the High Commissioner, and after the disappearance of Veniselos from the scene was in my opinion the only Cretan politician with a head on his shoulders. Unfortu-

nately his countrymen regarded him with suspicion, and attributed to him a tendency to prefer his private interests to the common weal; so he had little real influence, and, not being sufficiently strong-minded to maintain his own views against popular clamour, he generally drifted with the stream.

M. Michelidakis now asserted himself by inviting the assembly to adopt an appeal he had drawn up "to the whole civilised world" for the "recognition of the union of long-suffering Crete with its mother, Greece." The appeal was adopted unanimously by the Christian deputies, the Mussulmans abstaining from voting, and was duly broadcasted. The civilised world kept its head, and nothing happened.

The assembly wasted most of its time in sterile oratory over the external question, in party recriminations, and in languid discussions of a project for reforms in the internal administration of the island, which no one believed would ever be applied. Nevertheless amidst their public preoccupations the honourable members did not forget their private interests, and the assembly voted by acclamation that each legislator should be paid 1500 francs for his labours in the present session, with the grant, on his own proposal, of an extra 1000 francs for the President. For the session of last May they allotted themselves 1000 francs, and 500 francs on account of an afternoon's sitting in July. The total remuneration of the Chamber for less than three-quarters of a year, during most of which time they were not in session, came to 6 per cent of the annual

revenue of the island, and I fear that St Paul was right when he accused the Cretans of an undue regard for filthy lucre.

The opening in the name of the King of Greece and the renewal of the declaration of union had not escaped the attention of the Porte, which proceeded to enter a protest through its Ambassadors accredited to the four protecting Powers, and the latter for once in a way deigned to reply. There is no denying that their answer, which the Consuls were instructed to communicate to the Cretan Government, was of a nature to cause anxiety in Crete. The last pronouncement on the matter, the Note of 28th October 1908, declared that the Powers "considered union with Greece as dependent on the assent of the Powers who had contracted engagements with Turkey, but that they would not be averse to considering with favour the discussion of the question with Turkey, provided that order was maintained in the island, and that the security of the Mussulman population was assured." The Powers now to some extent went back on this, and at the same time inflicted a severe snub on the Cretans by informing the Porte that the "sovereign rights of Turkey over Crete have been, and still are, recognised by the Powers; consequently there is no reason for the Porte to pay attention to what has recently passed in the Cretan assembly, which on various occasions has already manifested in favour of the annexation of the island to Greece. These manifestations have no effect on the determination of the four Powers to maintain the sovereign rights in question. As for the future administration of the island, the four

Powers have decided to examine this question as soon as a favourable opportunity occurs."

Whatever may have been the motive of the Powers in thus emphasising the "sovereign" rights of the Sultan—and it must be presumed that they had a motive,—the Cretans were wild with indignation that rights which had hitherto been termed "Suzerain" should now be raised to the dignity of Sovereignty; and they believed, or affected to believe, that this foreshadowed an intention to restore some effective form of Turkish control. The assembly at once protested emphatically against the use of the expression. Public meetings were held all over the island, and we were inundated with copies of resolutions voted to denounce the monstrous thing and assert the determination of the Cretans to have none of it.

Political meetings in Crete were about as popular a form of recreation as football matches in England, and did not need to be taken very seriously, but sterner measures were advocated in the assembly. The Michelidakist party now joined the Government, in view of the crisis through which the Fatherland was passing, and on 28th December the assembly decreed the formation of a special fund "for national needs," which, it was understood, would be devoted to the purchase of arms, and passed a new law concerning military service. Hitherto one in four of the young men fit for service had been taken for the militia, but by the new law "every Hellene" between the ages of nineteen and fifty-four was required to serve for a year in the active army. Last, but not least, the assembly voted a salary of 100 francs

per month for a poet to the forces. The functions of this modern Tyrtæus would be to inflame the patriotism of recruits by reciting appropriate and original odes to them. The first laureate was at once appointed by the assembly in the person of the editor of the 'Flaflatas,' the only comic paper published in Crete—a most happy choice.

The fund for national needs was to be provided by a grant of 500,000 francs from a Treasury balance, the attenuated remains of a dowry of 4,000,000 francs with which the Powers had started the autonomous Government on its career. Private subscriptions were also expected from Cretans both at home and abroad, and the hat went round the assembly *séance tenante.* Most of the Christian members subscribed, or rather promised, 200 francs, some few even more considerable sums, while profound emotion shook the assembly when its President announced that his wife had contributed to the country's needs her watch, stated to be gold.

All this brave talk came to next to nothing. The new military force was never established, and hardly any of the deputies paid up their promised subscriptions to the fund. Some small contributions came in from Cretans in the United States and elsewhere abroad, which, with the sum voted from the Treasury balance, sufficed to purchase four thousand rifles a year later, and that was all. But the Cretans were pleased to have indulged their bent for fanfarronade, and to have defied—they did not exactly know whom.

One unfortunate result there was of the Turkish sovereignty agitation in the shape of a series of

outrages on Mussulmans. It also gave some leverage to M. Veniselos' enemies both in Crete and Greece, who accused him of failing to prevent if not of encouraging a retrograde step; and from this time onwards the Cretans appeared to lose confidence in the benevolent intentions of the Powers towards them, and to take a malignant delight in devising methods of baiting their protectors.

On their part the Powers came to regard the Cretans less as interesting protégés than as unmitigated nuisances, the *enfants terribles* of Europe; and instead of soothing them with encouraging hopes of favours to come, adopted the system advocated by the duchess for dealing with a recalcitrant child—

> "Speak roughly to your little boy,
> And beat him when he sneezes;
> He only does it to annoy,
> Because he knows it teases."

The Michelidakist members of the Government resigned at the end of February in the ensuing year (1911), on the ground that no effective measures were being taken for the defence of the Fatherland, and that no serious effort at retrenchment appeared in the budget. Shortly after this secession the assembly adjourned in a tumult, which did not, however, prevent the members from first voting themselves another handsome honorarium.

CHAPTER XIV.

CRETE—*continued.*

We were looking forward to a period of comparative calm when the Porte took a hand in the game by appointing Cadis, or religious judges, to take up their residence in Crete. Now the right of making such appointments was by the Cretan constitution vested in the High Commissioner; and though as a matter of fact no Cadis had been named since the ejectment of the Turks, their functions had been performed by the Muftis to the complete satisfaction of the Moslem inhabitants, who had in no way prompted the action of the Porte. The raising of the question was simply an attempt to make mischief, and it certainly succeeded.

The Cretans arose in their wrath, and armed meetings were held everywhere to protest against the appointment of Cadis by the Turks, and to declare that never, never would they be allowed to land in Crete, even if force had to be used to keep them away. At the meeting in Canea a good deal of promiscuous firing of guns was indulged in as a proof of patriotic ardour, and a stray bullet wounded a luckless Mussulman in the leg. It was quite an accidental but none the less an inopportune occurrence.

On their side the Turkish Government engineered meetings in various towns of the Ottoman Empire to protest against the infringement of the Sultan's rights on the part of the Cretans. In this instance, however, the Powers upheld the contention of the Cretans, and told the Turks to drop their project. Everything settled down again, but not before several Mussulmans had been murdered.

Meanwhile a violent agitation was carried on by the Opposition against the Government both in the Press and through local meetings, which resulted in the weakening of authority in general. The assembly was fully conscious of the contempt into which it had fallen, and when in August, Messrs Michelidakis and Poloyorghis issued a manifesto demanding that it should be summoned to vote its own dissolution and fresh elections, the President meekly obeyed, and convoked it for 14th September.

In the same month of September the period for which M. Zaimis had been appointed expired, and the Powers decided not to renew his appointment or to name another High Commissioner in his place. The Turks did not want them to, and they possessed no means which they were willing to employ of imposing a High Commissioner on the Cretans, who were in no mood to accept one. Accordingly the Consuls received instructions to inform the Government that the Powers did not propose to name a successor to M. Zaimis, but that they were determined to maintain the *status quo* in the island. To what particular *status quo* this referred no one exactly knew, but the idea seemed to be to leave the Cretans to stew in their own juice, and only

interfere to stop all action likely to have any prejudicial effect outside the island.

One would have thought that everything connected with Crete was already involved in sufficient confusion without further complications, but it was not to be. In September, Italy, one of the Powers who held Crete in trust for Turkey, became involved in hostilities with the *cestui-qui-trust*. The Italian warship was withdrawn from Suda Bay, and the Italian Consul ceased active co-operation with his French, Russian, and British colleagues.

The assembly met again early in October, and proceeded to discuss in secret session how best to profit by the Turco-Italian War. Many ingenious schemes were proposed for forcing the hands of the Powers—*e.g.*, that the assembly *en masse* should cross to Athens and insist on being admitted to the Greek Chamber, that a Royal Commissioner should be appointed to administer Crete in the name of the King of Greece, and that the capitulations should be abolished in the island; but the sole results were interminable squabbles, and the eventual resignation of the Government, after which recourse was again had to a non-political Committee, this time composed of two judges and a retired merchant. Finally, matters came to a climax at a sitting early in November, when walking-sticks were brandished by infuriated deputies, revolvers were drawn in the senate-house, and the spectators rushed into the arena to take part in the free fight which seemed inevitable, but in the nick of time a body of gendarmes marched in to separate the combatants. The more timorous of the deputies fled. Those who

remained seized the opportunity to vote the dissolution of the assembly, and decree fresh elections for March 1912. The only practical measure passed in this short session was another grant of 1500 francs to each member for his services.

The elections were never held, and the defunct Chamber proved to be the last of its race, for no sooner had the members dispersed than Michelidakis and his supporters came forward with a proclamation calling on all good Cretans to hold armed meetings in their various districts for the election of a "Revolutionary Assembly," which should control the further development of the national question. The programme suggested for this assembly included the appointment of a revolutionary government and the election of Cretan deputies to attend the Greek Parliament.

The proclamation did not indicate against whom the revolution was directed, nor is it likely that any one had a clear idea on the subject, but it was a fine sounding term, and appealed to the Cretan bent for bombast. No one ventured to object, and the Revolutionary Assembly was duly constituted. The "election" proved to be a very informal affair, practically any one who chose becoming a member, with the result that about a thousand were returned in the beginning, and as time went on this modest figure was largely exceeded.

The first meeting of the Revolutionary Assembly was held on 9th December, and Michelidakis was elected President. Such was the patriotic desire to hold office of some sort, that no less than eleven Vice-Presidents and ten Secretaries had to be chosen

to satisfy it. The assembly at once set to work, and within two or three days had selected deputies to go to Athens and represent Crete in the Greek Parliament.

The Porte immediately gave out that if the Cretan deputies were admitted, Turkey would declare war on Greece. The Greek Government, with justifiable emotion, appealed to the protecting Powers, and even they were at last aroused to action, and gave orders to their Consuls and naval officers to prevent the departure of the Cretan delegates. Under normal circumstances it would have been no easy job to do so, but the Greek Government largely facilitated matters by imposing a quarantine on all vessels leaving Crete except those sailing from the three ports of Canea, Candia, and Rethymo, and thus preventing clandestine departures in sailing-boats from out-of-the-way places on the long coast-line, which it would have been very difficult to counter. A ship of war was stationed in front of each of the three ports to maintain a blockade, and a naval party boarded every Greek steamer which came in, and remained on board until she sailed again, while several signalmen took up their quarters in my house to keep up communications between the Consuls and the ship lying off Canea.

It was not long before the system was tested, for a body of deputies received instructions from the assembly to leave for Athens by the Greek steamer *Spetsai*, which entered the port of Canea on the morning of 15th December. A guard of French sailors under an officer immediately repaired on board of her, but, nothing daunted, the little band

of die-hards pushed off from shore and embarked. A crowd had assembled on the quay to see the pilgrims off, and there was some applause when it appeared that they had effected their immediate object; but the demeanour of the majority of the spectators was rather that of the audience of a comedy got up for their especial benefit than of sympathisers with a patriotic attempt to realise national ideals. The deputies had in fact to undergo a good deal of annoying banter from the shore.

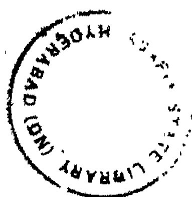
When the *Spetsai* weighed anchor in the afternoon the French officer ordered her to go to Suda Bay, whither the French ship *Amiral Charner*, which was waiting outside, convoyed her. The French, British, and Russian Consuls-General proceeded to the same destination by road, and went on board the *Amiral Charner* as soon as she dropped anchor. From there we sent a message to the deputies to say that we wished to see them on board the French ship. They replied that being charged with a confidential mission of high import they could not as a body leave the *Spetsai*, but that if we wished a deputation would wait on us. The deputation was told to come along, and the inevitable Poloyorghis appeared. We told him that in defiance of the prohibition of the protecting Powers he and his party had embarked with a view to proceeding as Cretan deputies to the Greek Chamber, that they had been caught in the act, and were now in the custody of the international squadron. We would, however, take the responsibility of allowing them to return to their homes, provided they gave their word of honour to re-

nounce their project and signed an undertaking to that effect. If they refused, they must leave the *Spetsai* and come on board the *Amiral Charner*.

As the deputation did not return, we sent to inquire the reason, and were told that they would give their reply next day. We agreed to this, and it being now midnight returned home. Next day one and all refused to give the required undertaking, and a show of force was required to make them leave their vessel. Half were then interned on a British and half on a French ship, and I fear that they suffered considerably from sea-sickness when it came to their turn to watch outside Canea.

It has occurred to me since that there was a touch of the arbitrary in thus arresting a Greek ship and imprisoning her passengers, and that it would have been hard to justify the proceedings by any law, either International or Municipal, except the right of the stronger. Fortunately the Habeas Corpus Act does not run in the Mediterranean, and we were able to indulge without fear of consequences in the rather special form of sport provided by the hunting of deputies.

An attempt on the part of a smaller group to cross to Athens led to the only instance where relations between naval officers and Consuls ever approached a condition which could be described as strained. There had been a violent storm off Canea, and all shipping, including the men-of-war, took refuge from it in Suda Bay. When the weather began to clear we heard that half a score of deputies would try to embark on an Austrian steamer then at Suda as soon as she came round to Canea, which



would probably be next morning. That evening I met at dinner the senior naval officer for the time being, who happened to be a Britisher, and imparted the news, with the request that a warship should accompany the Austrian to Canea in order to prevent the deputies from executing their intention. Once on board and under the protection of the Austrian flag there could be no question of interfering with them. The senior naval officer, who commanded one of the ships recently sent to augment the international squadron, was new to Crete, and perhaps inclined to pooh-pooh any suggestion from a civilian source; but in fact inquiry was made the same night of the Austrian captain as to the hour he proposed to leave Suda, and a warship was ordered to have steam ready to start at the same time.

This would have met the needs of the situation had the Austrian been a man of his word, but as it happened he up-anchored and was off an hour at least before the time announced, and I was horror-struck next morning to see his ship five or six miles away steaming straight for Canea, with nothing in the shape of a man-of-war in sight. I hurried round to the French Consulate, and found M. Bertrand almost in a state of collapse at the spectacle. After a hasty consultation we came to the conclusion that our only hope lay in the intervention of the Austrian Consul, so I dashed off to see him. Bertrand, being of the short and rotund type of French functionary, was unable to join in a mission whose success depended on speed. Luckily, M. Wein was at home, and though it was none of his business, he

good-naturedly undertook to help to the best of his ability, and together we doubled down the main road of Halepa, across the sands to the town, and through the narrow streets to the agency of the Austrian Lloyd Company, the accursed steamer all the while drawing nearer and nearer, and the result of the race remaining in doubt till the last moment. The ship was at anchor before the Consul, accompanied by his agent, could get rowed on board, but they had just time to order the gangway to be raised and no passengers admitted when a boat-load of deputies appeared alongside. By now a warship could be seen steaming hell for leather in the distance, and the situation was saved.

We had received a serious fright, and felt called on to address a letter to the senior naval officer, drawing attention to the disaster which might have resulted from the failure to dog the Austrian steamer, and expressing the hope that such a thing would not occur again. I do not recollect the exact terms of the missive, but it may well be that they implied a *soupçon* of self-congratulation on our superior vigilance. At any rate the mariners were effectually drawn, for next afternoon I received a hurried note from M. Bertrand containing the simple appeal, "A moi!" Hastening to the French Consulate, I found the poor little man penned in a corner of his study by four naval captains—two Britishers, a Frenchman, and a Russian—all in full uniform, and girded with swords to emphasise the solemnity of the occasion. I sat down by my colleague, and we waited timidly under the glare of four pairs of hostile eyes until the Russian Consul made his

appearance in response to the S.O.S. message he too had received, and then they opened fire on us.

If the interview began stormily, all were excellent friends again before it ended, and as a peace-offering we agreed, while making no mention of the painful incident, to report to our Governments that it was impossible for the squadron to watch the ports effectively in heavy weather without more danger to the ships than the occasion warranted. As it was, the *Minerva* had broken her capstan, and a French vessel had received serious damage, in the attempt to do so.

No further effort to evade the blockade occurred. The Greek Chamber was prorogued early in January 1912 as a preliminary to dissolution, and, the need for their detention having passed, the captives were landed with no popular demonstration of sympathy, a forlorn and depressed company; all except Poloyorghis, who had won the money of his fellow-sufferers at the card-games with which they solaced the hours of imprisonment, and who was correspondingly elated.

The first round had certainly ended in favour of the Powers, but after the Christmas holidays the assembly came up quite fresh to the scratch again. They began by rebaptising the existing Executive Committee as "Provisional Revolutionary Government," and by appointing in addition to it a permanent Committee of forty odd members of the assembly to watch proceedings at Canea. The decision to send deputies to Athens on the first opportunity was also affirmed again, and with a view to annoying the Consuls the Provisional Revolutionary Gov-

ernment were instructed to head all their letters to them "Kingdom of Greece." By mutual agreement successive Governments from October 1908 onwards had refrained from using this objectionable heading, which emphasised a status unrecognised by the Powers, and its employment now necessitated the return of all letters addressed to us by the Government, and led to an extremely inconvenient situation. The assembly then adjourned, until it should be time to participate in the Greek elections fixed for 24th March.

The spring of 1912 proved to be the worst time the Mussulmans had yet experienced. Amidst the ever-increasing relaxation of authority due to the contempt into which the Administration had fallen, the state of public security all over the island became worse and worse, and naturally the Mussulmans, as the weak and unpopular element, bore the brunt. Hitherto some private motive for murders and assaults had generally been discoverable; but with the outbreak of the "revolution" absolutely causeless murders became alarmingly frequent, and lent some ground to the contention of the Mussulmans that there was a settled design to terrorise them out of the country. The Mussulmans, of course, appealed to the Consuls of the Powers which had undertaken to provide for their safety, but all we could do was to urge the Government to perform its duties with greater energy; while the Government, whose writ by this time hardly ran outside the large towns, was almost powerless, though it did what little it could. We also sent a warship to Rethymo, where the majority of outrages generally occurred, and by

order of our Governments informed the Cretan administration that unless the attacks on Mussulmans ceased and the Cretans governed themselves properly, and without danger to the peace of Europe, "the protecting Powers would be obliged to act in a sense unfavourable to Cretan aspirations."

A vague threat of this kind was not calculated to produce any great effect on the class which harried the Mussulmans, and on 25th February a horrible triple murder took place at Kirtomado, a village in the immediate neighbourhood of the capital itself, where three inoffensive Mussulmans were shot down like bolting rabbits as they issued from a coffee-house in the village.

As soon as the news reached Canea a deputation of the more prominent Mussulmans called on us to complain of the murders and ask for protection. They at the same time declared that the patience of their co-religionists was near exhaustion, and hinted at the possibility of reprisals. We exhorted them to use their influence to prevent anything so dangerous, and assured them that the position of the Mussulmans in Crete was at present the subject of earnest consideration by the Powers, which I hope was true.

Our counsel of prudence had unfortunately no effect, for on the morrow a number of lower-class Mussulmans from Canea went out to Kirtomado, and, joined by others from neighbouring villages, proceeded, nearly a thousand in all, to march towards Halepa to exhibit the three corpses to the Consuls. The cortége was met on the outskirts by a small body of gendarmes and militiamen, under the command of a Greek officer, Captain Renglis,

which was lined up across the road, and were told that they would not be allowed to enter the town, but must take the corpses to the Mussulman cemetery outside, and there bury them. The crowd, however, refused to obey, whereupon a few shots were fired in the air to frighten them. In return the Mussulmans discharged several revolver shots at the gendarmes, one of whom had his clothes pierced by a bullet.

Captain Renglis' horse took fright at the noise, and that officer came to earth with more precipitation than dignity. His men, in the belief that he was hit, fired in earnest on the crowd, killing one outright and wounding two, whereat the demonstrators dispersed hurriedly. They left on the road the three corpses from Kirtomado and that of the man just killed, which the gendarmes removed into the dancing Dervish monastery hard by.

The report that Captain Renglis had been killed by Mussulmans soon spread through Canea and Halepa, where all Christians who possessed firearms hastened to fetch them from their homes, while many who had none supplied the deficiency by looting a gun-shop. The Mussulman inhabitants ran to cover as fast as they could, and left the Christians in possession of the streets. All shops were closed, as well as the schools, whose terror-stricken pupils ran shrieking to their homes. The majority of the armed Christians simply struck attitudes in the streets, but a number of the more bloody-minded formed up and marched towards the Dervish monastery to wreak vengeance on the Mussulmans sheltered there for the supposed slaughter of Renglis.

The members of the Government and the chief of the gendarmerie came forward at this point and showed commendable energy in preventing a collision, and the excitement cooled down when it became known that Renglis was safe and sound; but the Mussulmans remained in a state of great trepidation. To reassure them we requested the senior naval officer to send a couple of ships to anchor off Canea, which was done with good results.

That night a Mussulman baker in Canea chose this most inappropriate moment to quarrel with his Christian partner, because the latter was slow in getting out of bed to bake the next day's bread, and shot him dead. The murderer was arrested at once, and the affair hushed up as long as possible.

Next morning the influx into the town of armed Christian villagers scenting a row caused more excursions and alarms, but we were able to induce Michelidakis and other politicians having influence over them to get them away before anything untoward occurred, and gradually the danger of a bad outbreak, at one moment very imminent, was averted. All the same, another Mussulman was murdered near Halepa within the week by a perfect stranger, who met him casually on the road, and emptied his pistol into the unfortunate man's body.

Many of the Mussulmans now concluded with some show of reason that Crete was an undesirable place of residence for men of their religion, and began to emigrate from Rethymo and Canea to Turkey. Nearly three hundred left from the district of Canea in the month of March.

The protecting Powers were now at last goaded,

not into reoccupation, but into talking of reoccupation. But they never got beyond the talking stage, and concluded that at any rate they would first try the effect of a naval demonstration at Suda Bay as a means of intimidating their refractory charges. It took some little time for sufficient ships to be collected to amount to a "demonstration," and meanwhile the Revolutionary Assembly was far from idle. In the middle of March a resolution was passed abolishing separate government in Crete as an institution, and entrusting the administration of affairs to a "General Committee of eighty-one," which was to elect from its members each month a "Revolutionary Administrative Committee" of five to administer the business of the island in rotation until the whole list was exhausted. The General Committee was also instructed to select on 24th March, the date of the next Greek elections, sixty-nine deputies to represent Crete in the Greek Chamber.

It is hard to say what was the precise object sought for in this change of system. Where more or less permanent Governments, sometimes comprising members not entirely without administrative experience, had been unable to prevent the reign of chaos, no improvement could be expected from novices ruling for a month only, but the assembly seemed to think it an extraordinarily happy idea, and it certainly gave a chance to a larger number of patriots. As it turned out, monthly Governments had not much opportunity of doing mischief, for only three of them came into existence.

The sixty-nine deputies were duly selected on the 24th of March. By a kind of self-denying ordinance

the General Committee was forbidden to appoint any of its own members, and the deputies were chosen less on their record as politicians than for their supposed capacity to face a row, for M. Veniselos had let it be known that they would be forcibly prevented from taking their seats. As each of them was to be paid 10 francs a day while at Athens, with an outfit allowance of 300 francs, there was no lack of volunteers for the forlorn-hope.

As the concentration of warships when completed passed almost unnoticed by those against whom it was aimed, the Consuls were instructed to explain to the Cretans that it really was a naval demonstration, and that its object was to make manifest the intention of the Powers to maintain the *status quo*. This communication, quite the most fatuous I ever signed, only drew a rather impudent reply from the "Revolutionary Administrative Committee." Another cold-blooded murder of a Mussulman occurred at Rethymo, and the deputies began to slip away to Athens modestly and unobtrusively by twos and threes. No attempt was made to stop them; indeed it would have been impossible to do so, and our orders now were only to interfere in case they left in a body and demonstratively.

The whole lot might have got safely across but for the fatal vanity and love of display inherent in all men of Grecian stock. When forty odd deputies had crossed with impunity, the Permanent Committee was unable to resist the temptation to give an official send-off to those who remained, and to announce it beforehand in the local Press.

On the day fixed there was but a small gathering

of the general public, who appeared rather indifferent, as was the case on the previous occasion. However, the members of the monthly Government attended, and the Acting President of the Revolutionary Assembly bade farewell to the party in a neat speech, in which, with small prophetic insight into coming events, he assured them that this time they would arrive without impediment at the capital of Hellenism.

I was deputed by my colleagues to watch the proceedings, and ascertain whether the departure fell under our instructions, and it was not without pleasure that I saw Poloyorghis, suit-case in hand, go on board the Greek steamer *Peloponnesus* with nineteen others. Unfortunately that sagacious politician soon came on shore again on the pretext of sudden indisposition. He explained afterwards that he had seen the British Consul-General hanging about the quay, and smelt a rat.

The vessel sailed at the appointed time, and as my colleagues and I considered that nineteen deputies constituted a "body," and that the manner of their departure was certainly demonstrative, a pre-arranged signal was made from my house, and H.M.S. *Minerva* left Suda Bay to intercept her. The *Peloponnesus*, when overhauled, disobeyed repeated signals to stop, and only brought up when a blank charge was fired at her. The deputies were all on deck, and were so startled by the loud bang that they leaped with one accord into the air—to the height of six feet, so an Irish officer assured me afterwards, though this may have been an exaggeration.

The Greek ship followed her captor into Suda Bay, and the same procedure was followed as last time. The three Consuls went on board H.M.S. *Hampshire*, the senior officer's ship, whence an armed party of British, French, and Russian sailors was sent to bring the culprits on board. Some of them wished to demur, but easily yielded to a show of force, and they were all lined up before us on the deck of the *Hampshire*. We informed them that they had been arrested for flagrant disobedience to the orders of the protecting Powers, and would be detained until the pleasure of the Powers was made known. They could only urge in their defence that, as a number of their brethren had been allowed to go to Athens, they thought it hard to be arrested for following their example. The plea was hardly good enough, and we left them to their fate.

As might have been expected, the incident caused some ferment in political circles, though the general population took it with equanimity. The President of the Revolutionary Assembly called on us to request the release of the prisoners, while the Revolutionary Administrative Committee favoured us with a slightly insolent Note *demanding* that they should be let go to execute their mission, and assuring us that "the arrest would in no way discourage the Cretan people in the accomplishment of its unshakable determination to send its lawful representatives to the national Parliament." They also telegraphed to the King of Greece and to M. Veniselos, urging them to avenge the insult to the Greek flag. All this had no effect, and the poor deputies remained locked up on board ship for more than six weeks.

Their colleagues who had made their way to Athens had to linger there until the 1st of June, as the opening of the Chamber was postponed to that date, but it is improbable that a prolonged holiday in the capital at the public expense was in any way distasteful to them. When ultimately the Chamber was opened, they marched in a body to take their seats, accompanied by a cheering mob of the Opposition. The entrance, however, was barred by three lines of soldiers. The stout Cretans forced their way through the first line, but were brought up short by the fixed bayonets of the second, and failed to effect their purpose. Nevertheless, in the knowledge that the effort would be renewed *ad infinitum*, the Greek Government was forced to adjourn the Chamber again, this time for four months; and our deputies returned home with the satisfaction of having dislocated the political machinery of Greece, and got themselves talked about by the Press of every European country.

The prisoners were now released, and it was rather touching to receive a visit from the President of the assembly to express the thanks of that body for the considerate manner in which the captain and officers of H.M.S. *Diana* had treated the deputies detained on board the ship. There is this to be said for the Cretans, that they rarely bore malice, and that even those on whom we caused violent hands to be laid were always quite friendly and civil. At bottom they were kindly creatures enough, but just very naughty children.

They were not wanting European journalists to counsel reprisals. I remember in particular an

article by M. Henri Rochefort in his organ the 'Intransigeant,' calling the Consuls hooligans, and advising the deputies to carry revolvers and use them on us without hesitation. An Italian comic paper, too, published a cartoon representing four Consuls torturing a Cretan, in which I was depicted in a gaudy scarlet-and-gold uniform, with very prominent front teeth and long sandy whiskers of the type once known as "Dundreary."

The system of monthly Governments had not proved such a success as to warrant its continuance, and the statesmen of Crete now came to the conclusion that it would be best to revert to a paid political administration in order to tide over the interval until October, when they proposed to renew the attempt to get their deputies into the Greek Chamber. Accordingly the Revolutionary Assembly met at Canea in June to settle the matter. Michelidakis and Koundouros, as leaders of the two most numerous political parties, had obvious claims to be included, but as the latter gentleman was generally suspected, whether justly or unjustly I cannot say, of lacking delicacy in financial matters, it was deemed expedient to include in the administration three persons of undoubted integrity as a check on his supposed tendencies. All three of the honest men selected were aged and infirm, and one of them practically blind, which made it at times difficult to get together the necessary quorum of three for the transaction of business; but on the whole the new Government got along fairly well.

Before adjourning till October the Revolutionary Assembly voted a small *douceur* to its members.

The amount was only fifty francs, and to be considered as payment of travelling expenses, but hundreds of so-called members who had never attended at all claimed and received it. In the first session of the assembly it was decided that its members and the Governments it appointed should be unpaid, and the infraction of the rule now resulted in terrible jealousy and heart-burnings, in some cases leading to riots, amongst those inhabitants of country districts who, had they received warning that there was any sum, however small, to be made, would, like their more zealous or far-sighted brethren, have taken the trouble to undergo the very simple formality of election to the Revolutionary Assembly.

As it was, so many doubtful applicants claimed and were paid the bounty that steps had to be taken to impose some check by instituting a system of certificates, without which no one would in future be recognised as an M.P. These certificates were issued by the " bureau " of the assembly, and signed by a Vice-President; but the stock of Vice-Presidents was so large, and the number of their friends and their friends' friends so extensive, that within a couple of weeks over fourteen hundred of such documents had been issued, and a local newspaper mournfully estimated that Crete would end by having an assembly exceeding three thousand members.

This proved to be the last escapade of the Revolutionary Assembly, for it never met again. By the autumn of this year (1912) the alliance of Greece, Bulgaria, and Serbia against Turkey came into being, and early in October the decree ordering the

mobilisation of the Greek Army was at once imitated in Crete, where the Government called out the militia and dispatched them to Greece to help fight the Turks. The protecting Powers wailed and expostulated, but could not make up their minds to use force to prevent the departure of the troops, which duly left under the eyes of the foreign warships.

Such an exhibition of impotence emboldened the Greeks to thrust the Powers completely aside, and take charge of Crete themselves. Towards the end of the month M. Dragoumis was sent from Athens to act as Governor-General, and administer the island as part of the Greek dominions, and the *status quo* sank into a dishonoured grave.

From this point until Crete was finally ceded by Turkey to Greece in the treaty of peace, existence became incredibly dull. The Consuls' occupation was gone, their position as representatives of protecting Powers who had ceased to protect slightly ridiculous, so I was not sorry to leave Crete for good in the summer of the following year.

CHAPTER XV.

A CONSULATE IN WAR-TIME.

Salonica, when I came back as Consul-General in the first week of 1915, was greatly changed from the town with which I made acquaintance first in 1885. In the first place, a fire of unusual dimensions, even for Salonica, had in 1890 burned down about a sixth of the houses, including the British Consulate in which I had lived for two years so happily with the Blunts, and after rebuilding the place presented a much smarter appearance. The streets were now broader, and traversed by electric trams. An artificial port, with large warehouses to back it up, gave greater facilities than before for trade, and the population had increased by thirty thousand or more. A new residential quarter had grown up in the suburb of Kalamaria beyond the walls, and whereas on my first visit not a single Consulate was situated outside the town proper, now there were none inside.

Considerable in their way as were all these changes, they were as nothing compared with the transformation of the political conditions. The Turk had gone, bag and baggage, and the Greek now reigned in his stead. Far be it from me to deny that the country

and its people benefited on the whole by the ejectment of the unspeakable one; the state of security which now prevailed throughout the district was by itself almost sufficient to justify the presence of the Greeks. But from the point of view of the foreign subjects, the loss of the privileged position conferred by the capitulations was a sad blow, while the status and dignity of the Consuls suffered much from the same cause. The cost of living, too, increased vastly with the Greek régime. The price of all articles imported from abroad leaped up at once, for Greek import duties are absurdly high, and in some cases exceed the value of the goods, whereas the Turks had been bound down to a maximum of 14 per cent *ad valorem*.

The majority of the townspeople, too, did not welcome the change of masters. The Turks who remained naturally squirmed under the Greek yoke; while the Jews, forming by themselves more than half the population, disliked the Greeks, thought mainly of their commercial interests, and regretted the good old times before the hinterland, which Salonica supplied, was reduced to its present modest proportions. For much the same reasons their sympathies were chiefly with the Austro-German combination during the war.

Thirty years had made sad havoc with the British community as I once knew it, and now only two or three faces were familiar to me. No one from the old staff remained in the Consulate. Though with the abolition of the capitulations Dragomans had become obsolete, we still had two, but they had no functions to perform or privileges to enjoy, and I

rarely saw them. So with Cavasses. The two attached to the Consulate had relapsed from the position of armed guards to that of messengers and hall-porters, albeit they still came out in brave attire on State occasions, and tried to persuade themselves that their status had not suffered. There was also a clerk and a Vice-Consul. The latter, Knight, stayed with me all the war, a constant help and comfort, and was still in the Consulate when I left in 1919.

The house I found in occupation of the Consulate lay at the far end of Kalamaria, and was too distant from the port to be entirely convenient, especially for ships' captains, who sometimes grumbled at having to come so far; but later on the British centre of gravity followed the headquarters of the British force, which settled within a stone's-throw of us, and the situation became a positive advantage. The house was on the sea and without a garden, unless a strip of foreshore can be dignified by this name. Even this small spot had its use hereafter. The one bright point about my dwelling was that I had for landlord a British subject, Mr A. Abbott, who a year or two afterwards, when other house-owners doubled or trebled their rents, made no sign of wishing to raise mine—a forbearance for which I was profoundly grateful.

The situation in the Consular body was unprecedented and embarrassing. We were divided into three distinct sections: the belligerents of the Entente—Great Britain, France, Russia, and Serbia; the belligerents of the Alliance—Germany, Austria, and Turkey; and the neutrals—the United States,

Italy, Roumania, Spain, and Bulgaria. A time came when the Spaniard was left alone in his glory to represent neutrality, and the enemy Consuls were deported, but meanwhile awkward incidents were bound to occur from time to time. Coming to Salonica when the war was already in full swing, I knew none of the enemy representatives, and was spared the pain of a sudden and complete break with old friends; but for the same reason it was at first a little difficult to avoid them, as I did not even know them by sight. Calling one day on the Bulgarian Consul, I found a stranger there whom, with a sad lack of tact, he at once introduced as the Austrian Consul-General. Both of us were taken entirely by surprise, but, I think, rose to the occasion, and after a short chat on indifferent subjects the Austrian took his leave. If it had been the German Consul we might have started fighting with the Bulgar's fire-irons, but I never could feel much animosity against the Austrians.

To escape such little contretemps the belligerents on either side were constrained to limit their intercourse with the neutrals. When the Greek authorities gave a public function there was no avoiding it, and the neutrals stood between the two little gangs of belligerents, who valiantly ignored one another.

At this early period in the war Salonica seemed a little backwater remote from the storm of actual hostilities. Naval operations against the Dardanelles began in February, and the actual landing followed two months later, but beyond an occasional call from a casual ship of war, what went on

there had no effect on Salonica, and we heard little of what was happening. The magnificent and generally successful resistance of the Serbian Army to the Austrian onslaughts, though the scene of action was farther away, touched us more nearly, for all Serbian munitions and supplies necessarily passed through the port of Salonica; and when these were furnished from England, the Serbian Consul and myself were sometimes hard put to it to keep up with the task of checking the consignments.

Furthermore, a very small British naval force was already up at Belgrade for service on the Danube, and at intervals reinforcements came through Salonica, reported themselves at the Consulate, and had to be forwarded up-country. One such party consisted of nearly a hundred men, and the officer in charge, a temporary naval surgeon, who had naturally not the same control over his men as an executive officer, begged me to help shepherd his flock from the port to the railway station. The train left at an abominally early hour, so Knight and I were at the port by five to welcome the party as they left the ship which had brought them. The men were all in mufti of sorts, and bowler hats and reach-me-down suits gave the ordinarily smart blue-jackets a horribly rakish appearance; but deference to the neutrality of the Greek Government forbade their marching through the town in uniform. The whole affair had been arranged beforehand with the local authorities, but when we started to leave the precincts of the port we were peremptorily challenged by a sentry, and hung up until I could rout out a superior officer from his bed and get orders to

let the party proceed. With a Cavass in front to show the way, Knight on one flank and I on the other, and the surgeon whipping in, we reached the station safely without any attempt on the part of the sailor-men to sample the liquid refreshment obtainable *en route*, which was the calamity feared by their commanding officer.

Then Rear-Admiral Troubridge, with his flag-lieutenant and secretary, passed through to take command of the Danube force, and eight naval 4.7-inch guns with ammunition arrived for its armament. These were awkward things to take delivery of, and could not have got through without great good-will on the part of the Greek military, who, so far as I recollect, transported them to the Serbian frontier as their own. But certainly the most embarrassing consignment I received was a steam-cutter, fitted with gear for dropping small torpedoes, and its outfit of torpedoes, which was to transform Admiral Troubridge's party from a mere naval brigade serving on land into a genuine maritime force. Even with the funnel unshipped there was grave doubt as to whether this redoubtable craft on its truck could pass under the railway arches; but it got through all right, and was at once christened by its owners "The Terror of the Danube"—a proud title which it justified during the course of the summer by sinking an Austrian monitor.

A box forming part of this consignment was of so dangerous a nature (I think it contained detonators) that it required to be sent up-country in a van by itself. It duly started in solitary state,

but as the journey progressed the instructions were forgotten, and by the time Belgrade was reached the van was full of Serbians, all smoking cigarettes, and one of them reclining on the floor with his head pillowed on the box.

In return, I suppose, for these civilities a naval officer on his way from Belgrade to Athens had the kindness to drop four sacks full of Serbian bombs at the Consulate "to be left till called for," and labelled "Foreign Office Correspondence." The idea was that these were something rather neat in the bomb line, and might be tried with advantage at the Dardanelles, but I did not in the least like giving them house-room. A small nondescript auxiliary steamer came to fetch them in two or three days' time, and, being apparently under the impression that there was deep water alongside the Consulate, was steaming straight in when the vehement shouts and gesticulations of the whole staff saved her from shipwreck on our little reef forty yards out. Her anxiety to come close in was explained, when it transpired that she had come up to fetch the "correspondence" without having a boat on board, and I had to charter a sailing-vessel to convey them to her.

It is but justice to the Greeks to emphasise the benevolence towards the Entente cause of their neutrality at this period of the war, even after Gounaris had replaced Veniselos as head of the Government at Athens; and this attitude, along with the yeoman service rendered by the Greek Army in Macedonia during the later phases, to my mind far outweighs the hostility and treachery of King

Constantine in 1916, though public opinion is apt to lay stress on the latter, and to judge the Greeks solely in the light of Tino's misdoings.

The Serbian Army throughout the first half of 1915, while more than holding its own against Austrian invasion, waged an unequal struggle with the ravages of disease, owing to the inadequacy both in numbers and skill of its medical staff. Typhus made appalling havoc amongst civilians and military alike, until a British medical mission was sent out to deal with it, which it did with striking success. This was an official mission, but private enterprise as well came to the aid of the Serbs, and there was a steady influx of British doctors and nurses into Salonica, all bound for the theatre of war. That admirable institution, the Scottish Women's Hospital, had gone up already before the end of 1914; Sir Thomas Lipton brought out a consignment in great comfort on his yacht the *Erin*, and a few others came in driblets; but the bulk arrived on two special steamers. The first had over a hundred on board. The names of two units which I remember were the British Farmers' Hospital and Mrs St Clair Stobart's Ambulance. Those with whom I had the privilege of conversing complained bitterly that they had been half-starved on the voyage, and judging from the performance at table of a few who lunched with me next day I can well believe it. However, privations had not adversely affected their energy, and after a short but spirited scramble for possession of the limited number of railway-trucks placed at their disposal for the conveyance of stores, all of them drifted away northwards.

The next shipload presented in some respects a falling off from the first. One unit in particular was in a state of mutiny and almost disintegration, and its members remained eating their heads off in the town for quite a considerable time before matters could be adjusted. From this ship, however, there issued a romance. Immediately she arrived, a doctor attached to one unit called to announce his desire to wed a nurse belonging to another, and begged me to tie the knot. I expressed my readiness to do so, but reminded him that both parties must first reside for three weeks within my Consular district. This, he said, was impossible, as he was leaving in two or three days, and he went away sorrowing, but soon returned to say that he was advised that if he and the lady went out in a boat to a distance of three miles from the shore and were married by a Church of England parson (who was with them in Salonica as the driver of a motor-ambulance), it would be all right; and what did I think of the plan? I learned afterwards that the sage who suggested this device was the skipper of the ship which brought them out.

I replied that I was not a competent authority to pronounce on the legality or illegality of a marriage, but that in my opinion the validity of such a ceremony would at the best be doubtful, and I advised him not to trust to it. He retired, and I quite thought that the matter was dropped; but I was undeceived next day when two people staying in the bride's hotel came to lunch with me and provided me with an appetite for the meal by announcing that the wedding was to take place at once,

and that the parties gave out that I fully approved of it!

This was more than could be borne, so I wrote out letters to the parties, and to the head of the bride's unit, to say that I had never expressed approval of their project, that it seemed to me dubious, and that they would go through with it at their own risk, with no responsibility on my part; and I gave the documents to Knight for instant service.

Knight went off grumbling at leaving his lunch, and reached the hotel to find that the wedding party had already started, and were being rowed out into the bay. Nothing daunted, he too chartered a boat, started off in pursuit, and soon caught up the more heavily laden argosy of Venus. On receipt of the letter addressed to him, the doctor who presided over the bride's unit declined to proceed farther, and returned to the shore with Knight, but the rest of the party continued on their wilful way, and the parson read the marriage service over the couple and pronounced them man and wife.

This little incident caused great delight amongst the inhabitants of Salonica, and the next issue of the local 'Punch' came out with a cartoon representing Knight, with a large cocked hat on, urging his boatmen in pursuit.

All these hospitals and ambulances were sent out by independent organisations in Great Britain, which were able to exercise very little control over their doings; there was no central authority to co-ordinate them, and though some were efficiently conducted and rendered admirable service, in others irregularities and lack of discipline were by no means

rare. Later on Sir Ralph Paget, formerly British Minister at Belgrade, was made a kind of Commissioner to supervise all the British hospitals in Serbia, and I fancy that he had a stiffish job.

British subjects passing through Salonica were not by any means all going the same way. Refugees who had managed to get out of Turkey, and Britishers from Roumania, Russia, and elsewhere, escaping from the wrath to come, came through on their way to England, and sometimes in a state of destitution. In normal times I have found the relief of distressed British subjects one of the most invidious duties incumbent on a Consul, not from any natural repugnance to succouring the afflicted, but because there was never any real certainty that money thus expended would be refunded. The Foreign Office lays down very strict rules for the relief of inhabitants of the British Isles, and the Consul breaks them at his own risk, however urgent the circumstances may be. In any case he has to do all he can to obtain reimbursement from the person relieved or his friends before the Treasury will pay up. Where Colonials are concerned the home authorities will do nothing, and the Consul has to apply to the Colonial Government, and gets back the money he has advanced after long delay, if he can. So unless the British community is large enough and rich enough to maintain a relief fund, the unfortunate Consul has not unfrequently to put his hand in his own not particularly well-filled pocket.

During the war the Foreign Office, to its honour be it said, relaxed its restrictions, and left far more to the discretion of its representatives on the spot.

On the whole the State dealt befittingly, even generously, with its citizens abroad who suffered through the war; but all the same, cases would occur which called for help yet could hardly be helped from public sources, and I was lucky to have at my disposal the remains of a fund got up by the Lord Mayor of London during the Balkan wars of 1912-13, which his Lordship authorised me to supply to the relief of British subjects. It only amounted to about £100, but as the little cruse of oil approached depletion, it received occasional supplements from various sources, and at the end of the war there were even a few pounds over.

I was absent from reasons of health when the French and British expeditionary forces landed at Salonica in October 1915. By November, when I was back again, their hurried attempt to succour the Serbs, exposed to overwhelming attacks now that Bulgaria had entered the war against them, had already come to nothing, and both French and British were in full retreat on Salonica. What was left of the Serbian Army was struggling in complete disorganisation across the Albanian mountains towards the Adriatic, and the whole of Serbia was overrun by the enemy.

Why the Bulgarians did not at once advance on Salonica is something of a puzzle. In the light of subsequent events, it is unlikely that they were influenced by any pedantic respect for Greek neutrality; and the principal reason for their inaction is probably to be found in the condition of the Bulgarian Army itself, which, though victorious, had suffered heavy losses, and was more or less exhausted.

The immediate object, too, for which they had begun hostilities—namely, to recover the portion of Macedonia of which the Serbs had, in their opinion, wrongfully deprived them—was already gained, and for the moment there was no particular inducement to advance farther. Whatever the motive, they stopped short at the Greek frontier, and gave time for our Salonica base to be transformed into a vast entrenched camp from the Vardar marshes on the west to Stavros on the Gulf of Orphani on the east, and including the whole Chalkidiki Peninsula. With these lines behind it the Entente Army reorganised its forces, received reinforcements, resumed contact with the enemy, and awaited in safety the time for taking the offensive.

The greater part of the staffs of the British hospitals in Serbia accompanied the Serbian Army in its retreat across Albania, but a few ladies trekked south to Monastir and thence to Salonica. They must have had an awful time, trudging for days through the snow, with no transport and hardly anything to eat; but some who presented themselves at the Consulate on their arrival, hungrier than ever, were as cheery as possible, though their only possessions were the clothes they stood up in. Amongst them was Mrs Moore, the wife of my old Tabriz revolutionary friend; and Moore himself turned up from the Dardanelles a little after as a captain on the staff of the Salonica Army, and lived with me until he joined the Flying Corps two years later. It was quite like old times, though Moore was now an orthodox combatant, not a rebel.

Meanwhile the attitude of the Greeks was a con-

stant source of preoccupation to the allied command. In February of 1915 Veniselos desired that Greece should join in the Dardanelles expedition, and resigned when King Constantine refused to countenance this step. Gounaris succeeded him, and remained in office until August, when Veniselos came back on the strength of a renewed majority which fresh elections for the Greek Parliament had given him, and at once let it be known that, in the event of an attack by Bulgaria on Serbia, he proposed to honour the obligations which Greece had contracted by treaty towards the latter country, and come in on her side. In pursuance of this intention he was able to induce the king to sign a decree for the mobilisation of the Greek Army in reply to the Bulgarian mobilisation, and he raised no objection to the landing of French and British forces at Salonica in October. But at this point his activities ceased, for Constantine compelled him to resign, and after a month of Zaimis as Premier, the Government was entrusted to Skouloudis, Parliament was again dissolved, and a general election took place in December, which, through the perhaps unwise abstention of the Veniselists, resulted in a Chamber composed entirely of Government partisans.

The Government of Skouloudis not only repudiated its treaty obligations to Serbia, but adopted a distinctly unpleasing attitude towards the Anglo-French force at Salonica. The higher command of the Greek Army was whole-heartedly Germanophile, and the Greek Army, on a war footing, was established in Salonica and in the country round; the railways

were still under Greek control, and the partial use of them only grudgingly permitted to our forces; so too were the postal and telegraphic communications. Military stores imported for the use of the troops actually paid Customs duty to the Greek Government, and in every way possible the army was made to feel that it was an unwelcome guest on Greek soil.

It is quite possible that King Constantine for the first year and more of the war may have conscientiously believed that it was for the good of his people that Greece should keep out of it, and that it was this feeling which inspired his policy even more than his private German predilections and the influence of his German wife and his masterful brother-in-law. But the landing at Salonica, which he deeply resented, turned him into a bitter enemy of the Entente, and serious apprehensions were felt at times lest the unfriendly attitude of his army should suddenly develop into overt acts of hostility which might jeopardise the very existence of the Salonica force. I was once informed that the British community might have to be evacuated in a hurry, and was asked to state how many persons the Navy would be required to take off from shore; and on another occasion was warned to be in readiness to destroy my confidential papers. But, so far as I know, Constantine never got so far as to contemplate immediate hostile action against Powers which controlled the sea, and, as he well knew, could have ruined a maritime country like Greece in a month. Nevertheless, his attitude of one willing to wound and yet afraid to strike was quite sufficiently

embarrassing until the growing strength of the Salonica force reduced the Greek Army to comparative impotence.

To revert from great things to small, I must confess to a feeling of nervousness bordering on trepidation at finding my Consulate a little island of civil officialdom in the middle of an army. The British Navy I knew and appreciated, but who were these strange gentlemen in khaki, how was I to treat them, and, more important, how were they going to treat me? The awful fate of the enemy Consuls—German, Austrian, Bulgar, and Turk,—who at the end of 1915 were seized and deported and their archives rummaged by the French, was not encouraging. True, they had asked for it by persistently spying on and reporting the doings of the Entente troops for nearly three months, and the measure was a most necessary one, but that any Consuls should be treated so summarily gave a shock to the convictions of a lifetime. However, any apprehensions I felt proved to be entirely uncalled for. I think that I was reassured from the time when I diffidently applied to Sir Bryan Mahon, who commanded the British force for the first few months, to help me out of a difficulty which had arisen with the Greeks, and he responded with such kindness and alacrity that all was settled satisfactorily in a twinkling. Little by little as I got to know most of the officers at British headquarters, I found that a formidable appearance was often merely a cloak for extreme benevolence, and that I could count not only on every possible assistance which might be asked on official grounds, but on manifold material benefits

to which I had no claim whatever. To General Sir George Milne from the time, in May 1916, when he took over the command of the British Army until the war was over, I owe a deep debt of gratitude for constant friendship and support, and for a very delicate consideration which never failed.

The work of the Consulate had been quite sufficient from the beginning to keep Knight and myself pretty constantly employed from morning to night, but with the arrival of the troops and stricter control of trade it became much more than two could manage. The staff had to be largely increased to cope with it, and after sundry changes we finally settled down with a Consul-General, a Consul, a Vice-Consul, and an Assistant, as well as two Englishmen, refugees from Constantinople, as commercial experts. The Consul, A. Shipley, was brought from Morocco, and as he, unlike myself, had a taste for commercial matters, he proved a very tower of strength to the Consulate under its changed conditions. Poor fellow! he did not survive the war. The only one of us who suffered to any serious extent from the fever which was so disastrous to the army, he went home on sick leave in the summer of 1918, caught influenza in Paris, and died there.

Mills, the Assistant, belonged to the Far Eastern Consular Service, and was kidnapped for duty in Salonica whilst at home on leave. An imperturbability and a gravity beyond his years, acquired amongst the Chinese, adapted him particularly for dealing with the more frivolous of our clients, such as V.A.D.'s.

Any one wishing to import goods from Great

Britain into Greek Macedonia was first obliged to submit his demand to the Consulate, which, after examination of his personal record and the needs of the place in that particular article, and turning him down relentlessly if he were known to have had dealings with the enemy, might grant him a recommendation for an export permit. This recommendation would then go to a central allied board at Athens, which controlled the imports into the whole of Greece, and, if passed by it, to England, after which the lucky merchant was free to purchase and send out his consignment—if he could find a ship to bring it. Where anything of a contraband nature was concerned, the disposal of the goods was carefully watched after arrival, as there were numbers of natives quite ready to take the risk involved in attempting to smuggle such things into the enemy's lines. I remember the difficulty we had in estimating the exact amount of castor-oil (an excellent lubricant for delicate machinery and so contraband) required for relieving a town population of a hundred and fifty thousand Jews, Greeks, and Turks, and the awe with which the statements on the subject of the local physicians and druggists inspired me.

The accommodation in the Consulate being now quite insufficient, I took a supplementary office in the commercial quarter of the town, and here Shipley installed himself with the two Constantinopolitans, and to my great relief undertook the whole of the Permit duties, with the exception of petroleum, which I looked after myself.

The petroleum question was one which gave much

trouble from the beginning, particularly after German submarines had made their appearance in the Mediterranean. The supply at Salonica was almost exclusively in the hands of the Standard Oil Company, which, being an American and neutral concern, was naturally only interested in selling as much of its products as it could, regardless of who purchased them. The Company's employés in Salonica were under the orders of the head office at Constantinople, controlled by hyphenated Americans whose sympathy was entirely with the enemy, and whatever their private feelings may have been they were bound to execute instructions. On the other hand, the British Government had the whip-hand of the Company in that the latter's stuff had all to be brought across the Atlantic, and its operations would be much trammelled if we exercised our rights as belligerents. In the end a compromise was effected. The Company appointed an Englishman, Mr S. Smith, as their agent at Salonica, and undertook that the distribution of petroleum in the district should be under the supervision of the British Consulate; while the Government let their consignments travel undisturbed, and secured for them a monopoly in Macedonia. The arrangement worked very well. The sale of petroleum in the town itself was left to Smith's discretion, he only furnishing the Consulate with a weekly return of transactions. But whenever he proposed to send a consignment to any of his agents outside he had to apply to me for a permit, and this if given was then submitted first to British and then to French headquarters to be countersigned, after which the stuff could be

sent out without risk of interference. Only a limited supply was allowed to go at any one time, strictly proportioned to the immediate needs of each several agency, and the agents were all approved persons, who had furnished security for their good behaviour.

It will be readily understood with what zest a population having the commercial instinct so highly developed as Jews and Greeks profited by the presence in its midst of several hundred thousand foreign soldiers. Wages larger than ever known before were earned, rubbishy goods were sold at many times their proper value, and house rents rose to fantastic levels. The British, having more money to spend than the rest, were naturally the most fleeced. In course of time, when the town was placed under martial law, house property could be requisitioned for military purposes, and fairer rents were fixed, but even then the owners made handsome enough profits.

On the other hand, there were obvious drawbacks to the position of neutral inhabitants of a territory on which foreigners were fighting. The visits of enemy aeroplanes began at a very early date, and though as a rule their attacks were directed against camps and other military establishments on the outskirts, the town suffered occasionally, and a number of civilians were killed or wounded, and some property destroyed. The position of the Consulate in Kalamaria was in this respect advantageous, as it lay outside the usual track ot air raids, and only one came our way at all. On this occasion the objective of the aeroplanes was the shipping in port, and it was rather uncomfortable to watch the

bombs splashing in the sea and coming nearer and nearer, like a stone making ducks and drakes, and apparently straight in our direction. The last was aimed at the Russian cruiser *Askold*, anchored about a quarter of a mile off the Consulate, and fell our side of the ship but at quite a safe distance.

This particular raid was the cause of some perturbation in Roumanian circles, when a bomb was reported to have fallen in the garden of the Roumanian Consulate, where it buried itself without exploding. Careful watch was kept lest any unauthorised person should attempt to tamper with the dangerous visitor until the competent authority appeared in the shape of a party of engineers, when it was dug up and found to be nothing more terrible than an empty shrapnel-case fired by an anti-aircraft gun.

The destruction wrought by air raids in our camps and hospitals outside the town was, I believe, serious, and considerable loss of life resulted. But it would have been indiscreet to ask for details. Sometimes one saw the effects, as when an aeroplane bomb touched off a French dump of high explosives near the railway station, which was fortunately situated outside the town. From my house a couple of miles away I could see an immense column of dark smoke rise slowly hundreds of feet into the sky, and, spreading out like a mushroom at the top, hang in the still air like some grisly phantom menacing the the whole town. Another time the port had a narrow escape. A bomb fell on a quay two or three yards only from a British ship which was moored to it, and loaded with explosives. As it was, the

ship's side was riddled like a sieve with fragments of the bomb.

The enemy were so near to Salonica—under forty miles as the crow flies—that the half-hour it took them to reach the place afforded small opportunity to intercept them, while the fire of "Archies" seemed to have little or no effect, and the shells, as far as I could see, always burst far below the aeroplanes. On the return journey they ran more risk, and a good proportion were brought down. As the Entente air forces increased and finally obtained the mastery in the air, this nuisance was almost entirely abated.

A Zeppelin called twice on Salonica. On the first visit it did a good deal of damage, and returned unscathed to the place from whence it came. On the second, Nemesis overtook it. Between one and two o'clock of the morning of 5th May or 6th May 1916 (I am uncertain which was the day) I was awakened by the noise of furious gunfire, and ran out on to the bedroom verandah, where the whole household soon joined me, and we became spectators of a fascinating scene. Less than a mile away, over the sea in mid-heaven, was a Zeppelin, caught in the beams of the searchlight of H.M.S. *Agamemnon*, while every anti-aircraft gun on shore or aboard ship blazed joyously at her with an appalling din. The path of their projectiles through the air could be distinctly followed from the "tracer" sparks in their bases, and anything more thrilling than to watch them gradually approaching their mark or more mortifying than to see them miss it, I cannot imagine. The silvery hull of the Zeppelin, rising and

ducking and twisting to escape from the inexorable searchlight, might have been a salmon which the *Agamemnon* was playing at the end of a line. This went on for a few minutes, and then everything was dark again, and the guns ceased firing. A shell (fired by the *Agamemnon*, so everybody on board averred) had put the Zeppelin's engines out of action, and she fluttered across the bay, to come down in the Vardar marshes on the far side. There her crew at once set fire to her, and the gas for a few seconds burned with a furious blaze, which turned night into day.

This was followed by a burst of applause, such as might conclude an exhibition of fireworks, which ran along two miles of sea-front from the port to the end of Kalamaria, where thousands of the inhabitants had gathered to watch the spectacle. The squealing voices of women uplifted in a shrill pæan of rejoicing over the downfall of the common enemy afforded a rather comic relief to the tension of the preceding minutes.

The crew of fourteen men were captured next day in a state of nature while drying their clothes in the sun. According to their statement, which was very likely correct, the Zeppelin had her base somewhere in Hungary, so she had travelled a considerable distance to get at Salonica. The searchlight had caught her before she could drop a single bomb, and the crew were quite blind and helpless in its glare.

A certain amount of feeling was provoked by the disposal of the Zeppelin's flag. This trophy was first taken possession of by some of the crew of a

British warship, but there was no commissioned officer with them, and a French officer bluffed them into handing it over to him; and once the French had got it they stuck to it, though the Agamemnons claimed that it should have been theirs, as they took the chief part in bringing the airship down. The feelings of the commanding officer of the British ship can be imagined when he passed through Paris a few weeks after and saw the trophy displayed in the Invalides Museum there.

The tug-of-war between Constantine and the Entente proceeded merrily throughout 1916. On 28th January, French and British detachments seized the Greek batteries commanding the entrance to the bay of Salonica at Karabournou and Touzla, which were a constant menace to the army's free access to the sea. This was an extraordinarily well-executed and well-planned coup, and the batteries were in our possession without bloodshed before the Greek troops in the town had an inkling that anything was up. Constantine's retort courteous came at the end of May in the shape of the delivery to the enemy of the fort commanding the Roupel Pass, which gave them access through the Rhodope Mountains into Eastern Macedonia, and deprived their opponents of a possible point of entry into Bulgaria. This was a shrewd blow to the Entente, but Constantine can hardly have calculated all its effects. The overrunning of Greek territory from Okjilar to Serres by the hereditary enemy of Greece, which was the inevitable consequence of the surrender of Roupel to the Bulgars, the carrying off into captivity in Germany of the mass of a Greek army corps, the

loss of the port of Cavalla with the rich country at its back, and only a promise in return that the whole would be restored after the completion of the war, was more than many even of Constantine's admirers could stomach, and his hitherto undoubted popularity waned in consequence. Two or three thousand of his officers and soldiers who refused to surrender with the rest, and escaped from Cavalla full of indignation, formed a nucleus of disaffection in the Greek Army, and the whole incident played into the hands of Veniselos.

We had not long to wait for General Sarrail's counterquip quarrelsome. On the 3rd of June (and it is not difficult to believe that the date was purposely chosen as being Constantine's birthday) he suddenly proclaimed martial law in Salonica, took into his own hands the railways, posts, and telegraphs which the Greeks had hitherto held, but still allowed them to govern the civil population of the town.

Constantine's troops remained in Salonica for the moment, but their time too was at hand. In August the discontent evoked by the surrender of Roupel and Cavalla came to a head, and on the 30th of that month placards suddenly appeared in the town calling on the Greek people and army in the name of the "Committee of National Defence" to join the allied forces in ejecting the Bulgars from Greek territory. The leader of the movement was General Zimbrakakis, an officer of Cretan origin, and its mainstay the Gendarmerie, which was also recruited for the most part from Cretans. Zimbrakakis followed up his placards by marching his gendarmes

and volunteers to French headquarters and offering their services to General Sarrail. The offer was graciously accepted, and, thus encouraged, the revolutionary party demanded the surrender of the barracks which housed the greater part of Constantine's troops in the town. This being refused, they proceeded to invest the barracks, and there was a good deal of desultory firing between the parties in the small hours of the morning of 31st August, which resulted in some half-dozen casualties on either side. I must have slept soundly that night, for I heard nothing, although the scene of action was only half a mile away.

By seven o'clock a mixed French force was on the ground, sent by General Sarrail to maintain order. An hour or two later the Commander-in-Chief himself appeared, and informed the Royalist officers that he could not allow casual scrapping between Greeks in a town which served as his base and where he had established martial law, and that they had better come to a settlement with their adversaries. This hint resulted in the surrender of the Royalists to the French, and the consequent triumph of the Committee of National Defence. Such of the Royalists as chose to take service with the new régime were allowed to do so, the rest being shipped off to Athens.

Veniselos now entered on the scene. After evading the surveillance under which he was kept at Athens and touring in Crete and other Greek islands, where he was received with enthusiasm, he landed at Salonica on 9th October. I witnessed his arrival from the club verandah, and a strange spectacle it

was. The Greeks—at least those of whom I have experience—seem quite unable to organise any public function in such a manner as to ensure that some measure of decent order will be preserved. They were annoyingly fond at Salonica of holding services in their cathedral on every possible occasion, and of insisting that the foreign Consuls should be present in uniform, and we always had to fight our way through a mob of loafers in the aisles to get to the positions allotted to us. But the reception of M. Veniselos exceeded everything I had seen hitherto in the way of undisciplined confusion. No sooner had he set foot on the quay, than a riotous crowd of admirers surged round him and pushed him to right and left, backwards and forwards, grabbing at his hand or his coat, and all the time shouting "Ζήτω" at the top of their voices, and preventing him for a long while from making the least progress towards his destination. I had always admired M. Veniselos, but never so much as when I saw him thus buffetted and yet preserve a fixed smile of benevolence on his face and his hat on his head.

I called on him after dinner that evening at his hotel, and was greeted with the words, "Well, Mr Wratislaw, here I am again; in revolt as usual."

The Provisional Government which he and his two friends, Admiral Condouriotis and General Danglis, established at Salonica was not immediately recognised by the Entente; indeed it was not at first much more than tolerated. They were allowed to exercise jurisdiction over the part of Macedonia which lay within our occupation, but forbidden to

annex more islands than they already held, and a neutral zone was created south of Salonica and held by French troops, which prevented them getting at Constantine or Constantine getting at them. These restrictions sadly limited the recruiting-ground for the National Army which M. Veniselos at once began to organise, but he managed to collect more men than could be at once armed and equipped, and several battalions were in line with us on the Struma before the end of the year.

Veniselos arrived in Salonica tentatively with no certainty that he would remain, and he was at first insufficiently provided with much that was necessary for a man in his position. He possessed, for instance, no means of communicating confidentially with his agents abroad or in Athens, and in this respect I was authorised to help him as far as I could. Although I was sometimes called on to devote to this task more time than I could comfortably spare, it was never anything but a pleasure, and the frequent opportunities it entailed for personal association with him only increased the admiration—I may say affection—with which he inspired me from old days in Crete. There is no need to enlarge on M. Veniselos' talent for affairs, which is universally recognised; but besides being a political genius and a great patriot, he is emphatically a "white" man and a gentleman, and another Balkan statesman of whom the same could be truly said would be hard to find.

The patience shown by the Entente Governments towards Constantine is one of the marvels of the war, but even they began to show restiveness at the

constant menace of a hostile Greek Army to the rear of their forces. An ultimatum demanding its disarmament was delivered, and the ultimatum backed by a naval demonstration off Piraeus. Constantine promised compliance, but failed to perform, and on 1st December 1916 a body of two thousand men, mostly French with a handful of British, was landed from the foreign warships to occupy Athens and take delivery of a quantity of Greek artillery. The town was full of Greek troops, and under the circumstances the proceeding appears to have been an extraordinarily rash one, although it was alleged that Constantine had given an informal undertaking that the landing party should not be molested. However that may be, the Greek troops suddenly opened fire on the little force, which could make no effective reply, and it was only saved from annihilation by the warships commencing to drop shells in the vicinity of the palace. Then Constantine allowed them to withdraw, escorted by Greek soldiers. The French had three hundred and fifty casualties in this lamentable affair, the British fifty, which enabled Queen Sophy to telegraph with pride to her brother in Berlin that "It was a great victory over four Great Powers, whose troops fled before the Greeks, and afterwards withdrew under the escort of Greek troops."

Not even this episode exhausted the long-suffering of the Entente, and Constantine was left for six months longer on his throne. But the Provisional Government at Salonica was now recognised.

In January 1917 I was instructed to inform M. Veniselos that His Majesty's Government proposed

to appoint Earl Granville, a Councillor in the Diplomatic Service, to be British Diplomatic Agent to his Provisional Government, and to inquire whether the appointment would be an agreeable one. The telegram reached me late in the afternoon, and after dinner I went round to the "Palace" (a waterside villa formerly reserved for the king on his visits to Salonica, which the Provisional Government had gleefully appropriated) to deliver my message. I found M. Veniselos a little depressed, for his cause did not seem to make much headway, and the murder or ill-treatment of so many of his friends at Athens by the Royalists after the events of 1st December had hit him hard. He brightened up at once when I told him that I had good news for him, and on learning what it was he simply bubbled over with joy, for the appointment of an accredited agent implied formal recognition of his Government and the end of a precarious and indeterminate situation which must have been very trying. When I got up to leave, M. Veniselos put his arm round my shoulders, and we danced together down Constantine's reception-room to the door.

Salonica in war-time afforded but few occasions for pleasurable recollection, but this was assuredly one.

Lord Granville arrived almost immediately, and both France and Serbia followed the lead of Great Britain in the matter of appointing diplomatic representatives in Salonica. Italy, which never approved of the Provisional Government, continued to stand aloof.

Lord Granville's stay in Salonica proved all too

short. In June 1917 the Powers at last forced Constantine to abdicate in favour of his second son, and to leave Greece. The eldest son, now king, was passed over as being tarred with the same brush as his father. The Provisional Government thereupon lost its *raison d'être*, M. Veniselos returned to Athens to form a Government for the whole country, the Diplomatic Agents followed him, and the brief period of Salonica's political importance came to an end.

Purely military events during this time were briefly as follows. In April and May 1916 the remnant of the Serbian Army was shifted from Corfu (where it had been recuperating and reforming since its retreat to the Adriatic) to Salonica, and soon took up the position on the left of the line opposite Monastir, which it kept until the end of the war. In July and August two Russian brigades arrived, as well as an Italian contingent. Much was hoped from the presence of Russian soldiers on this front, as it was considered that the Bulgars would dislike fighting against their old friends and liberators, and that their *morale* would suffer from their having to do so. Nothing of the sort occurred. On the contrary, when the decomposition of Russia set in next year, Bulgarian propaganda continually endeavoured to tamper with the Russians. Eventually the whole force became unreliable, and had to be removed from Macedonia.

The first fighting on a large scale after the retreat from Serbia occurred in August 1916, when the enemy attacked the Serb positions on the left, drove them back, and entered Greek territory, capturing

the town of Florina. Within a month a counter-attack by the Serbs and French not only recovered the lost ground, but pushed on and took Monastir, and the Serbs were again installed on part of their own territory. Broadly speaking, this marked the extent of our progress for two whole years.

By the time of the Bulgarian offensive against Florina, the British Army had settled down in the positions it was to hold till the end, from Ghevgheli, on the Vardar River, along which runs the main railway from Salonica to Belgrade, eastwards to the ill-omened Struma, and then along that river south-east to the Ægean Sea. When the Monastir offensive started in September, the British made a holding attack against the Bulgar positions on the left bank of the Vardar, and obtained some success ; but the ground gained was not meant to be held, and was given up when the real object of the move was attained—*i.e.*, to pin the enemy to their positions and prevent their sending reinforcements westwards.

With a similar object considerable British forces next crossed the Struma to attack the Bulgar positions in the plain of Serres. In this direction real successes were realised, and in a series of engagements heavy losses were inflicted on the enemy at moderate cost to ourselves. After one engagement fifteen hundred of their dead were found on the field. But here nature stepped in to nullify the efforts of our gallant troops. The swampy valley of the Struma proved to be a very sink of malaria and impossible to hold, so the troops were withdrawn to the high ground on the right bank, while maintaining bridge-

heads across the river. The enemy were in much the same case, and the Struma Valley became virtually a No Man's Land.

The winter of 1916-17 passed with little incident, but a terrible amount of sickness. In the spring a general offensive all along the Serbian frontier was planned, but came to nothing. The British Army in the last week of April and the first week of May delivered two desperate assaults on the main Bulgar positions near Doiran—positions of the greatest natural strength, which were held by forces superior in number, and particularly in heavy artillery,—and was able to gain hardly any ground, while suffering very heavy losses. Meanwhile the French and Serbian advance on the left wing, which was to have been the main attack and which the British action at Doiran was intended to support, was held up by bad weather, and when made was not pressed home. Though raids and skirmishes went on, there was no more fighting on the grand scale until September 1918; but this at least was effected, that the whole Bulgarian Army, with its stiffening of German and Austrian troops, was immobilised on the Macedonian front.

The terrible sufferings of our troops from malaria have earned for Salonica an unenviable reputation as a fever-trap, which is hardly deserved. I cannot say that malaria was entirely unknown to residents in the town, for I made my own first acquaintance with this unpleasant malady there in 1885. But it was by no means of a severe type. One began with a sensation of general uneasiness, which might continue for several hours, growing more and more pro-

nounced until the cold fit came. Then one went to bed shivering, and piled on blankets till the hot fit arrived, which was the most unpleasant stage, with headache, pains in the back and limbs, and a high fever. Suddenly, just as one began to surmise that death was at hand, a profuse perspiration came out, the fever ceased, a gramme (15 grains) of quinine was administered, and all was over. The whole operation need not last more than twenty-four hours (at least that was my own experience), and there was no recurrence, though a certain lassitude and weakness remained for several days. Compared with what I underwent afterwards in Philippopolis and Basra, Salonica fever was child's play.

The fever which nearly put our army out of action was contracted in the Struma Valley or other malarious parts of the British sphere, and was of a far more malignant character. The ordinary symptoms were vastly accentuated, the supervening debility persisted for an indefinite time, and the malady generally recurred. The only real cure was to send the patient home, but unfortunately the increasing destruction of British shipping through submarine activity greatly limited the opportunities for doing so, and the majority of fever cases had perforce to remain in the country, swelling the nominal muster-roll of the army, but adding little to its real strength. The total number of admissions into hospital from malaria in the three years, 1916, 1917, and 1918, reached the formidable total of 160,000—more than double those of the more numerous French Army, which occupied less unhealthy positions.

Other diseases, such as dysentery and diarrhœa, were also rife, and in the autumn of 1918 a very bad epidemic of influenza was added to the list. When it is remembered too that the climate of Macedonia was generally unfavourable to campaigning, intensely hot in summer and bitterly cold in winter, and that most of the fighting of the British Army consisted in assaulting a numerically superior enemy holding almost impregnable positions, and this not to gain glory for itself but in order that success might be won elsewhere, it is easy to understand the indignation with which our sorely-tried men saw their efforts so little recognised at home, and even heard the expedition derided by ignorant and would-be facetious persons in England as "the Salonica picnic."

The difficulty of giving the men home-leave at such a distance from England was a further trial. All that could be done in the matter was done, yet very many hardly got home at all. Serious mutinies occurred in the French Army from this cause, although the French soldiers got more leave than the British, who groused and carried on. To say that the conduct of our men generally towards the inhabitants was exemplary conveys an inadequate idea of their behaviour. It was more than exemplary: it was almost quixotically good. In the country districts they occupied they were known amongst the Greek villagers as the Δεσποινίδες, the Demoiselles, from the gentleness and modesty of their deportment. The Greek Governor of Salonica, after making a tour in the country round, called on me specially to express his gratitude and convey his

congratulations thereon. He told me that in one place an old lady came to see him, and asked for an explanation of a demeanour which bewildered her. She had, she said, seen many armies in her time—Turks, Greeks, Bulgars, and Serbs,—and she knew how soldiers behaved, but never anything like these Britishers. She seemed to take it rather as a slight that the women-folk of the country should be as safe from insult in time of war as in time of peace.

The Salonica fire of 1890 destroyed, as I have said, about one-sixth of the town. That of 1917 wiped out nearly ten thousand buildings, and made quite half of the civilian population homeless. It began a little after three o'clock in the afternoon of 18th August 1917 in a little house in the north-west corner of the town, where a woman (*cherchez toujours la femme*) was doing her cooking in a room strewn with hay, and spread rapidly before a violent wind which was blowing from that quarter. At tea-time some one told me that there was a fire on, and I went upstairs to have a look at it. All that could be seen was a dense cloud of smoke still in the far distance, but I knew from experience at Constantinople how fast a fire could travel amongst inflammable buildings with the wind behind it, and I felt a little uneasy. So I rang up British Base headquarters, which was in the same street as our town office, and inquired whether there was any risk of the fire coming that way. The answer was completely reassuring, but I still had my doubts, and obtained a promise that I should be warned if circumstances changed.

When the office was closed at six o'clock I went

up into the town to see what was going on. By this time the fire had progressed as far as the Via Egnatia, the old Roman road which bisects Salonica, and after consuming the slummy parts to the north of it was beginning to attack the better-class district between it and the sea. Even now people did not seem to realise the extent of the disaster which was impending. Nothing practical, so far as I could observe, was being done to combat the fire or to remove portable property in time. No organised fire-brigade existed in the town. The Turks, easy-going creatures, who cared for none of these things, were in the habit of leaving the responsibility to the insurance companies as being the parties principally interested, and the Greeks who succeeded them had hardly had time, even if the inclination existed, to institute a change. The insurance companies did possess a couple of antiquated fire-engines, which, under favourable conditions, might deal with a house on fire, but were powerless against a conflagration. Besides, the summer of 1917 was an abnormally dry one, and only a trickle of water was left in any of the town fountains. The military remained unaccountably inactive, though their base was threatened with ruin. French headquarters, as being in chief command, should have taken the initiative, and the French as yet showed no sign of life or, at any rate, had ordered no combined action. By the time that they got stirring the fire was beyond control, and all that could be done was to save life and a little property.

I returned home for dinner, and after a hurried repast was by no means reassured by what was



SALONICA QUAY THE DAY AFTER THE FIRE.

visible from the upstairs windows. Now that it was dark and the flames could be seen, the sight was very formidable, and half the town seemed ablaze. No word had come from Base headquarters, but it was obviously time to think about the town office, so Shipley, Mills, and myself started off in the car on salvage bent. It was easy going enough as far as the White Tower, but after that the path was much encumbered by refugees staggering along under the weight of such of their poor possessions as they could carry, by sick persons lying in the streets, and army lorries, mostly British, going up and down picking up the helpless and rushing them off to safety. We struggled through to the office, and found that Base headquarters, a few yards down our street, was already being evacuated—the rascals had evidently forgotten their promise to ring me up,—and it was high time to follow suit. The main fire was still three hundred yards or so away, but sparks fell on the roof, and before we had finished carrying papers and registers to the car a house farther down the street burst into sudden flames. Then, as things were literally getting too warm, we made the best of our way home.

I did not myself see them, but two British motor fire-engines had been brought into action nearer the port than we were able to get, and were pumping water from the sea. Though they did very good work in saving isolated buildings and preventing the spread of the fire in that direction, they were powerless to arrest the onrush of the flames. The fire was finally brought up by a shift in the wind, which diverted its original diagonal course across the

town, and drove it straight on to the sea-front, and when the buildings on the quay were consumed there was nothing left to destroy, and the fire stopped.

For a day or two crowds of homeless unfortunates slept out in any open spaces they could find (luckily the weather was fine and warm), but in a wonderfully short time shelter was found for them all. In some cases friends whose houses had escaped took them in voluntarily, while any one who had an empty room in his house was compelled to give it up to a refugee family. Some thousands emigrated by degrees to other parts of the Mediterranean as ships could be found to convey them, but most were provided for by the military either in tents or huts, and whole colonies of fire victims grew up thus round the town. The British community for the most part lived in Kalamaria outside the area affected by the fire, and the only members of it who suffered were the Gibraltar Jews, some thirty of whom—women, children, and a couple of old men—came permanently on my hands. I managed to obtain possession of a very rickety building near the Consulate, which the British Army printers had just evacuated, and which belonged to my landlord, and installed them in it—a wretched dwelling-place enough, but we were lucky to find anything at all in the shape of a house for them.

Henceforward the overcrowding, very perceptible before, became something phenomenal. Not a very clean and sanitary place at the best of times, the wonder is how the town escaped an epidemic under these conditions, but with the exception of in-

fluenza in autumn of the next year nothing untoward occurred. Perhaps it was partly because the refugees under military care were taught to wash.

The fire hit British insurance companies who had agencies in Salonica very hard, and in two or three weeks a whole posse of their representatives came out from England to examine the situation. At first there was some little hope amongst them that the origin of the disaster might prove to have been due to enemy action, and so exempt the insurers from liability under ordinary policies; but investigation did not support such a theory, and it was soon abandoned. The companies paid up like men to the tune of some £3,000,000, and provided a very valuable, albeit expensive, advertisement of British commercial rectitude.

In December of this year General Sarrail, the Commander-in-Chief of the whole Salonica force, was recalled to France. Good soldier as he was, it would be idle to pretend that under his command the various Entente armies formed a particularly happy family, or that even the French Army itself enjoyed uninterrupted concord within its own ranks. The task of presiding over armies of different nationalities must at best be a difficult and invidious one, and surely such a conglomeration of races in arms together—French, British, Italians, Russians, Serbs, and Greeks—had not been seen since Xerxes led his heterogeneous hordes over the same ground twenty-four centuries ago. It was a mixed team to drive, but I hardly think that General Sarrail possessed either the tact or the broadness of mind necessary to get the best results out of it.

From the Apologia he published at the end of the war, under the title of 'Mon commandement en Orient,' one gathers the impression of a jealous and intolerant personality, incapable of putting himself for a moment in the position of another, and but too ready to impute slackness, disloyalty, or other unworthy motives where nothing of the sort existed. It would be hard to say whom he upbraids with greater vigour in this book—the allied armies, their Governments, the French War Office, or some of his own subordinate generals; and when a man falls foul of all with whom he has to deal, the conclusion is obvious that much of the fault must have lain with himself.

From the day when General Guillaumat arrived to take over the command, things changed very greatly for the better. He only remained a few months, and was then succeeded by General Franchet d'Esperey ("Desperate Frankie," as the British Army baptised him); but the new and more cordial relations remained undisturbed.

Housekeeping in Salonica was by no means an easy job, particularly during the last two years of the war, when the depredations of enemy submarines had seriously restricted the number of merchant vessels available for bringing supplies. There were times when the poorer classes of the population came within measurable distance of starvation, and when no bread was produced by the town bakeries for several days together, and when baked at all was of the most execrable quality. A Central Board at Athens was charged with the provisioning of the whole of Greece, and sometimes



GENERAL GUILLAUMAT DECORATING A BRITISH OFFICER AN EMBARRASSING MOMENT.

one could not help feeling that Salonica did not get its fair share of such cargoes as managed to run the gauntlet of the submarines, because the Board counted that if the worst came to the worst the armies would not let the population die of starvation. The feeling may have been unreasonable, but as a matter of fact a crisis did occur once or twice, when the civilians would have been in a parlous state had not the military come to their rescue.

Towards the end of 1917 British headquarters offered to ration me and my household, which usually included three or four hungry Englishmen besides myself; but the offer could not be accepted at first, because it did not include the British colony, and it would hardly have done for the Consul to fill his stomach with His Majesty's bread and bully-beef while the community was sent empty away. Such obduracy on the part of headquarters never lasted very long, and in the end every British subject who wished received a soldier's rations, and we were all made happy, except Mills, who had to keep the accounts and collect the money.

The bounty of the army did not stop here. They even supplied me with winter fuel, which became almost unprocurable, and petroleum, which towards the end could not be had at all from outside sources. And last, but not least, they put a motor-car and an army chauffeur at my disposal.

Reference has been made to a strip of foreshore in front of the Consulate, which eventually came to be of some use. The spot was apparently ideal for the army carrier pigeon establishment, and I was accordingly requested by the O.C. Signals to allow

it to be installed there, to which I, of course, assented. So a palatial dovecote was erected in front of the Consulate, and the pigeons duly arrived, under the charge of Sergeant Shaw and his squad, who pitched their tent alongside, and almost became part of our family. It was no small advantage to have soldiers installed at our very door in view of the frequent burglaries and robberies of all sorts in Salonica, and, apart from this consideration, to watch the pigeons taking their exercise over the sea, and to listen to the sergeant's eulogies of his favourites, his stories of their prowess, their loves, and their invariable success in matches against their colleagues attached to the French Army, afforded an agreeable distraction from our daily routine. Never was a man who took such an interest in his charges or watched over their welfare more carefully. There was one sad story of the death of a pigeon which he could not tell without emotion. This devoted bird had flown from the front only to fall the prey of a marauding hawk on the very outskirts of the town, where his remains were picked up. There was not much more left of the pigeon than there was of Jezebel when the dogs had done with her; but the message he bore was still attached to the skeleton, and duly reached its destination. Faithful unto death indeed.

There was one little circumstance connected with the pigeons which I relate, not in any spirit of complaint, but simply as an instance of how forgetful men can be. When the O.C. Signals originally approached me on the subject of my foreshore, he held out as an inducement that the spare pigeons should be mine, to stew or roast or do as I liked

with. In the process of time it became evident that the marriages arranged by Sergeant Shaw amongst his flock had been abundantly blessed with progeny, and that the pigeon community needed thinning. So one day I said to him, "How about the squeakers and pigeon-pie?" "Oh no, sir," he replied; "I have orders to send them all up to the R.E. Mess." And orders being orders, I never got my teeth into any of the pigeons, young or old.

The fire effectually wiped out our town office, and it would have been impossible to find another even if it were required. But such commercial activity as war conditions long prolonged had permitted to Salonica nearly disappeared in the general ruin, and the commercial work of the Consulate relapsed to little more than pre-war dimensions. The two commercial assistants sought other spheres of useful employment, and the Consulate premises proper sufficed to deal with a sadly-diminished band of suitors for permits.

Nevertheless, I do not remember that we were ever hard up for occupation. The presence of somewhere about two hundred thousand extra Britishers connected with the army inevitably increased the work even of a civilian authority, and there was always some one who wanted to be married, or to have a passport, or to get a power of attorney drawn up, or to swear an affidavit, or something of that sort, and who came to the Consulate for assistance.

Performing a marriage was always a duty I abhorred. The nervousness almost invariably manifested by the parties led to nervousness on my own part; the ceremony did not occur frequently enough

to become a mere matter of routine, and I was always horribly afraid of making some mistake in the registration, as any little error is extremely difficult to rectify afterwards when the parties and witnesses have dispersed. Then, too, a marriage before a Consul lacks in every way the artistic touch, the words used being about as bald and unconvincing as the old American formula, "Have her? Have him? Pay three dollars." Mr Blunt, who first initiated me into this rite, claimed that the Consul had the right to kiss the bride—a privilege which he insisted on exercising when circumstances rendered it sufficiently attractive,—but I did not possess enough assurance to follow his example, and for me the ceremony remained rather a penance without any compensating advantage.

At first the Army seemed to be unaware that there was any other means besides the Consulate of being joined in holy matrimony, until I pointed out that the Foreign Marriage Act provided for the validity of marriages performed by a chaplain within the lines of a British Army, and even then there remained a rooted belief that the ceremony as performed by a Consul could be a secret one. When it was explained that a notice of the intended marriage must be displayed on the Consulate door for a fortnight, and that the actual ceremony was performed with doors open so that any one who chose could saunter in and witness it, several amorous warriors retired in bitter disappointment; for though the military authorities did not forbid the marriage of soldiers, they ruthlessly packed off the bride to England after allowing a meagre three days' honey-

moon. One officer, bolder than the rest, said that he would chance it rather than face the chaplain and the tin chapel where concealment was impossible; and his confidence in the obscurity of my proceedings was not unjustified, for I met him in company with his wife quite a month afterwards. Others, with no idea of keeping the matter secret, preferred the civil to the religious ceremony, with the result that I performed more marriages while at Salonica than during the whole of my career elsewhere, though this does not imply any formidable total.

Sometimes an English "other rank" would espouse a Greek girl. One such couple came to me to be united who could not speak a word of each other's language, and I had to serve as interpreter between them. I fear that the prospect of future happiness for such unions was not great.

In the easy times before the war there was something rather happy-go-lucky about our passport system. As a means of ensuring that the possessor of a passport was really the person in whose name it was made out, his signature was required on the document, and that was all, although the first thing a thief would do would be to learn to imitate the signature in case he were called on to write it in order to prove his identity. With the outbreak of war and enemy spies everywhere, a stricter system became necessary, and in addition to a photograph a fairly full description of the holder was endorsed on the passport.

Officers and soldiers of the British Army travelling to England or elsewhere in uniform did not, of

course, need to carry passports, and the exemption at first extended to the nursing staff. Later on—in the winter, I think, of 1917-18—an edict appeared requiring all nurses and V.A.D.'s to be provided with passports, the reason being, as I understood, that enemy spies had been detected in Italy disguised in the uniforms of British Army nurses, and that the Italian Government consequently insisted on some safeguard to distinguish the sheep from the goats. Until this time I had not realised what an enormous hospital staff is required for an army, and how often its members are shifted about or go on leave. We used to receive batches of from twenty to seventy applications for passports at a time from nurses and V.A.D.'s, and as each one took at least a quarter of an hour to make out, and they were usually required in a hurry to catch a particular ship, to say nothing of our having to get them all visaed by the Italian and French Consuls before they were ready for use, no small amount of trouble was entailed, and Mills and I had often to work at them until the small hours of the morning.

I regret to say that sometimes, in the exuberance of spirits engendered by approaching departure on leave, a V.A.D. might be tempted to be facetious in making out her application. This would never have occurred if they had come in person to the Consulate, for, to my intense gratification, I heard on several occasions that even the pertest of V.A.D.'s who approached me on business had been completely overawed by an austere official manner. But the applications were collected from the various hospitals, and sent in wholesale by the Provost-Marshal,

and we never saw the applicants. Such levity would have been suitably punished by sending back the forms for correction, but this might have meant the loss of an opportunity of going on leave and perhaps a reprimand, so Mills was instructed to straffe the naughty girl over the telephone, and I would enjoy listening to a conversation such as the following :—

"(Mills speaking.) Please give me the umpteenth Stationary Hospital. . . . Can I speak to Miss Gladys Smith. . . . Is that Miss Gladys Smith ? . . . Oh, I wanted to speak to you about your application for a passport. . . . Yes ; there *is* something wrong. You have stated your height to be seven feet two inches, which I presume is incorrect. . . . No ; it can hardly be a slip of the pen. The statement is made in words, not figures. . . . Thank you ; I will alter it to five feet four inches. Then under the heading of 'Special Peculiarities' you have written 'Attractive features and an engaging expression.' This is useless for purposes of identification, and besides, the description does not tally with the photograph attached. . . . 'Special Peculiarities' is meant to cover such distinctive marks as a squint, or a hare-lip, or a red nose, or . . . Pray be calm. I am very glad to hear that you have no such blemishes. I will leave the space for 'Special Peculiarities' blank. Thank you. Good-bye."

The predilection of the Jewish section of the population of Salonica for the Austro-German cause did not survive the capture of Jerusalem by General Allenby's army and Mr Balfour's announcement that Palestine would serve as a national home for

the Jewish race. These occurrences provoked what may almost be termed an explosion of joy amongst the Hebrew community, which manifested its feelings by a commemorative service in the principal synagogue, and by inviting thereto the allied staffs, the Consular body, and the civil authorities of the place. It was an impressive ceremony, distinguished by a decorum which the Greeks could never manage to attain in similar functions. Then the various societies and corporate bodies brought me addresses of congratulation and gratitude to His Majesty's Government to be forwarded to London. The very pupils in the schools came forward with an address, "From the Jew boys of Salonica to the schoolboys of England," as their spokesman phrased it, and I was even presented with a bouquet by Jewish ladies.

This was all very gratifying, and the pleasure and gratitude of the Jews was obviously sincere. But when I asked the members of the various deputations, as I made a point of doing, whether they personally proposed to migrate to Palestine and profit by the "national home," the answer was invariably in the negative.

It is a little difficult to recall much in the way of amusement at Salonica during the war, for one was at work most of the time; but two occasions when I really did enjoy myself stand out in my memory. The first was when Major-General Gilman, General Milne's then Chief of Staff, motored Lord Granville and myself to see the British front at Doiran. What struck me most—as I suppose it would most civilians witnessing modern fighting for the first time—was the entire absence of what one

is accustomed to consider the outward and visible signs of warfare. I do not think that we saw a hundred British soldiers in the whole day, and never the trace of a Bulgar, although we were near enough for British guns to be firing over our heads and for us to see the shells bursting on a spot where they assured us was an enemy gun emplacement. An aeroplane was flying overhead, spotting for the guns, and occasionally we heard a short burst of machine-gun fire from an invisible British trench, and nothing more. The one thing patent was the enormous natural strength of the positions held by the enemy —tier after tier of rock-hills gradually rising towards the main mountain range behind, with not a scrap of cover of any description to afford shelter for an attacking force,—and even a tyro could understand to some extent what our men were up against.

The Army and Navy Boxing Championships furnished the other occasion. The whole proceedings lasted three afternoons, two for eliminating bouts and the third for the finals, and took place in the open air, like some old Greek theatrical performance, in a kind of amphitheatre dug out of the side of a hill by prisoners of war. Here heavy-weights, welter-weights, light-weights, and bantam-weights belaboured one another for three rounds with an honest enthusiasm and good temper which professional champions fighting for preposterous money purses never display. As some twelve thousand soldiers were looking on at a time, the opportunity was one which an enterprising and unsporting enemy might have seized, and I must confess to being a little taken aback when I arrived on the scene and was

presented with a paper of instructions regarding the procedure to be followed in case of an air raid. British aeroplanes too were sent up so as to be ready for any emergency, but nothing occurred to mar the harmony of the meeting, which was brought to a peaceful conclusion with the presentation of the prizes by General Guillaumat.

By the summer of 1918 the Entente armies on the Macedonian front, though weakened by casualties, sickness, and, in the case of the British at least, by the removal of troops to other centres, had, on the other hand, received valuable reinforcements in the shape of several Greek divisions; while the enemy were to some extent weakened, as German battalions were withdrawn to meet the onward push in France, and for the first time they found themselves slightly inferior numerically and considerably weaker in artillery. The time had come to put into execution the plan, devised some time before by the Serbian command, whereby it was hoped to break through a part of the enemy line some twenty miles east of Monastir, which in view of its natural difficulty was known to be very lightly held. Serbian and French troops were concentrated opposite this point with the greatest secrecy; and when on the 14th of September a furious bombardment broke out all along the front, the enemy was quite at sea as to the precise point where the assault was to be expected. Early in the morning of the 15th the French and Serbs advanced against the heights of the Moglenitza range, and after a whole day's hard fighting broke through on an eight miles' front. Serbian divisions held in reserve poured through the gap, and re-

lentlessly pursued the broken enemy. Probably no troops in the world could have maintained the pursuit as did the Serbs, ever pressing forward over the rough mountain country miles ahead of their transport and often without food; but they were chasing a hated enemy out of their own Fatherland, from which they had been exiles for three long years, and nothing could stop them, neither Austrians, nor Germans, nor Bulgars, nor fatigue, nor hunger. In a month and a half they were back again in their capital on the Danube.

Meanwhile the British resumed their time-honoured rôle of attacking positions held by a greatly superior enemy which there was but the faintest hope of capturing, in order to ensure the success of the main attack on the left. This object was effectually attained, for not a Bulgar could be moved from the Doiran front to repel the Serbian onslaught; but two days of strenuous fighting resulted in no material advance, and our losses had been very heavy, one battalion losing 75 per cent of its strength and another more than 50 per cent. The Greek Army, too, which shared in the attack and behaved with much gallantry, suffered severely. Taken altogether, the losses in this direction far exceeded those incurred in the break through, and afford eloquent testimony to the bravery and devotion of British and Greeks alike.

Two days afterwards the Bulgarians, whose communications were threatened by the Serbian advance, evacuated their positions, and retreated towards Stroumitza, closely followed by the British, whose aeroplanes took terrible toll of the enemy entangled

in narrow passes, and it was our troops who first of the Allies set foot on Bulgarian soil. But the Bulgars were now thoroughly beaten, and, like the practical nation they are, did not hesitate to recognise the fact by sending Commissioners to Salonica to treat for peace. Great was the emotion in the town when these gentlemen made their appearance; still greater when, on 29th September, it became known that an armistice had been signed, and that the war, so far as Salonica was directly concerned, was at an end. A bare fortnight had elapsed since the offensive started, and the first member of the Austro-German combination to succumb had thrown up the sponge.

A month later Turkey, too, had to knuckle under and sign her armistice, and a troop of British civilians who had been interned in Constantinople while hostilities lasted made their way to Salonica to be dispatched home. No lodging could be found for them in the desolated town, but all were provided for in hospitals or other military establishments, and before long they were sent on their way rejoicing.

I found several old friends from Basra, Constantinople, Bagdad, and elsewhere amongst them, besides an Italian whom I had known in Tabriz, and even a son of my own made his appearance after four years' internment.

The case of a luckless French marine engineer, who had somehow been caught in Turkey and was now released, was about as tragic a thing as I ever heard of. It was indeed hard luck to lose his life as soon as he was free, and all through a paltry

mutiny of Chinese seamen on board a British merchant steamer; but so it was.

The ship in question was lying at anchor in the bay of Salonica, and the master rather incautiously observed to the foreman of her Chinese crew that the extra bonus the men were receiving in addition to their pay would not continue indefinitely, now that the submarine danger for which it was paid had ceased. The thrifty Chinamen were in the habit of drawing their pay only at long intervals, but they now got it into their heads that the bonus already earned was threatened, and insisted on its being paid up-to-date at once. The master, unprovided with funds to meet this unexpected demand, declined, whereupon the crew struck work. The master riposted by locking up the galley, saying, "No makee work, no eatee chop," or words to that effect. The crew, finding themselves hungry, made a rush at the master to mob him, and he was thrown down on the deck; and the officers, coming to the rescue of their commander, fired revolvers at the mutineers, and wounded four of them.

The Chinamen picked up the injured men and put them into a ship's boat, which they lowered and rowed away, and were soon lost to sight in the mist which lay very heavy over the bay that day.

The master now went off to report what had happened to the senior naval officer, leaving instructions to the chief officer that if the deserters came back they were not to be allowed on board until he himself returned. He had not been long gone when a boat was observed coming out of the mist towards the ship, and the chief officer, under

the impression that this must be the Chinese coming back, ordered the third officer to fire a rifle across her bows as a hint to keep away. The rifle was accordingly fired, but the bullet, instead of falling as intended into the sea, passed through the head of the poor French engineer, who was sitting in the stern of the boat, and in process of being landed from a French ship which had brought him from Constantinople, and killed him dead.

It is easy to imagine what a stir this incident created, especially in French circles. A joint Anglo-French naval inquiry was held into the circumstances, but the affair was obviously an accident, and that was the finding of the court, which, however, severely criticised the carelessness displayed.

What the Chinamen actually did was to row straight to the Consulate, deposit their wounded on the ground between my house and the shipping office, a separate detached building, and rush inside it to lay their case before Knight, who presided over that department. As soon as Knight could escape he came across to me, but I was as powerless as he to deal with a score of apparently demented Celestials, all shrieking at once in a language I could not understand, while the groans of the wounded men (none of them were really seriously hurt) mounted up to Heaven. Nothing could restore order, not even the intervention of the pigeon squad, so I rang up the Provost-Marshal, my ever-present help in time of trouble. The Provost-Marshal, after an expression of natural repugnance to do what he considered the dirty work of the Navy, good-naturedly sent round a picket to remove the Chinks to prison